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["YOU DO REGRET IT," JANETA SAID. "IF I COULD SET YOU FREE I WOULD GIVE YEARS OF MY OWN LIFE!"]

A FEARFUL SECRET.

CHAPTER V.

NATHALIE did not find the last three days of her sojourn at Dorbury half so charming as she had anticipated. Perhaps Monday's headache had left her weak and ill; certainly she felt quite dull and listless the next morning, and was bitterly disappointed when they went on the pier, and did not find John Drew waiting for them as usual.

"He is so funny," said the child to Janeta. "I know he is not so nice as you, but he makes me laugh."

A strange pang seized on Janeta. Would the being "so funny," would the gift of making people laugh, prove sufficient qualifications in a husband to make her happy?

Nathalie, with a child's quick perception, had read John Drew pretty thoroughly. He was gay, light-hearted, and amusing, but he was not "like" Janeta; not the character adversity strengthens, not the prop a woman can cling to in time of trouble.

Poor Nettie! a strange misgiving seized her. She needed all her ambition, all her bright visions of herself as a peeress and leader of fashion, to make her quite contented with yesterday's work.

"You won't see Mr. Drew any more, Nathalie," she said, scornful to deceive the child who trusted her. "He came to say good-bye yesterday. He was going up to London this morning."

"Did you send him?"

Janeta hesitated, which proved fatal.

"I'm sure you did," cried the child, reproachfully. "Oh, Nettie, how could you do it! He was so kind; and he did so like being with us! He told me once he had never been so happy in his life!"

Janeta thought of Lady Claudine, and wondered.

"Nathalie, dear, I can't explain it to you, but I was not unkind to Mr. Drew; and we parted good friends. He had to go to London. Indeed, he seemed anxious to be away from Dorbury. He would have said good-bye to you, but you know you were asleep."

Nathalie was mollified.

"I like Mr. Drew," she said, gravely. "He is not a bit like the professors; and I think he has been unhappy. Mrs. Rice says so, or I should never have guessed it."

"Never mind about Mr. Drew. Let us enjoy to-day, Nathalie, for we have very little time left here."

They tried to enjoy themselves—went through an awful amount of sight-seeing, but somehow the zest had gone off their pleasure. Everything seemed tame and flat; even Nathalie declared she should not be so very sorry to get back to Normanton Hall.

"Only I shall not have you," she added, affectionately, nestling up to her friend very much in the fashion of a tabby kitten. "But, then, the cottage is close by, so I shall see you often, even though you don't come to school every day as you used to do."

"I am not going back to the cottage, Nathalie."

Nathalie pressed her for an explanation; fortunately one was ready, which was true, and yet did not even introduce John Drew's name.

"You know I am not rich, like you, dear, and I shall have to work for my living."



"When papa comes home you shall live with us," said Nathalie, with the decision of fourteen. "You know I have written to him about you, Nettie, and I know he will be fond of you."

"I don't think Mr. Duval will see me with your eyes, child; but, anyway, I am going to try and be independent. Miss Spargo has heard of a situation which may suit me; and, instead of going with you to Normanton, I am to go straight on to London, and stay with Mrs. Hutton for a day or two to see the lady who is seeking a companion."

"But if she doesn't like you, or if you don't like her," suggested Nathalie, "you will come home?"

"I have no home. I don't know where I shall go, Nathalie, if I don't take this situation; but I feel pretty sure I shall not come back to my aunt."

Perfectly true. She did not in the least know where she should go after her wedding, for her lover had never given one hint as to their future life. He had spoken passionately of his love; he had pleaded vainly for a stolen marriage, but of what was to come afterwards he had given not the slightest idea of his wishes.

She was ambitious—it was her besetting sin. She had heard of Alandyke and its glories. No wonder that she imagined herself going there to take possession.

Lady Drew, young, beautiful, and beloved, going home as mistress of that fair Yorkshire house. What fate could be brighter? She would bear her husband well. She would study her husband's pleasure in all things, and for his sake strive to please his friends, so that all the countryside should envy their neighbour's luck, and say he was well rid of false, mercenary Lady Claudine, and had done wisely to wed this lovely girl, whose face was her fortune.

Janeta felt strangely hopeful. She had always believed it was easy for rich people to be good. It seemed to her her father must all take flight when once she was given the wealth and luxury she had coveted so long.

And little Nathalie Duval, struck by the strange, new beauty shining in her father's face, pressed Nettie's hand lovingly, and pleaded—

"You'll come and see me sometimes, won't you? You are so pretty, dear, that lady is sure to want you; but you'll come back to me sometimes. I don't think I could bear to go home to Normanton, Nettie, if I thought I should never see you again!"

The tears were in her eyes. "Nonsense, child!" said Janeta, affectionately. "Don't talk as though we were to be parted for ever! Don't you know I am very fond of you, Nathalie? I couldn't get on at all without my little friend!"

Mrs. Rice took leave of her lodgers with regret, and assured them she should expect them again next season.

Nathalie caught at the idea, and declared she would come; Janeta only smiled gravely, and said nothing.

Twelve months hence she would know whether she had decided aright. One year of married life would have taught her whether riches sufficed for happiness.

Dorbury, as everyone knows, is not on the direct line to London; probably to this reason the pretty watering-place owes its drowsy calm.

Nettie had to change at Caversham—the same junction, where Miss Spargo had parted from her and Nathalie. Indeed, she would actually pass through Normanton on her way to the metropolis; but she and her little friend must part at Caversham, since the London train was an express, and did not stop between Caversham and Reading.

There was half an hour's detention at Caversham, before Janeta could start on the last stage of her journey, and the train for Normanton was not due till later still. Foreseeing which, and not liking the little heiress to be alone, even for a few minutes, Miss

Spargo herself was waiting for them at the junction; and having given their luggage in charge to a porter, the kind-hearted school-mistress ordered tea, and the three were soon gathered round a little table in the refreshment-room, two of them cheerful enough.

"Dorbury must be a wonderful place," said Miss Spargo, kindly. "I never saw you look so well, Nettie. Nathalie here does credit to the sea air, but the change it has worked in you is simply marvellous!"

"I feel very well," said Miss Spargo, thoughtfully, "and more of a woman! How do you like the idea of Mrs. Carlyle's situation, my dear?"

As Janeta had never troubled herself to read the particulars sent her, knowing she was already "sited," this question was awkward, but she parried it by another.

"Do you think I should suit her, Miss Spargo?"

"Admirably, I should say, and living in Yorkshire might be an improvement, as you would be near your father."

"Yorkshire is a large county."

"Yes, my dear, but Hillingdon is not twenty miles from Sandford, and Captain Leigh means quite a fixture there, doesn't he?"

"Quite. Yes, I dare say it would be well to be near him. Where am I to see Mrs. Carlyle?"

"She is staying for a week at Richmond. Alice Hutton has fixed for you to call on her to-morrow afternoon."

"Does Mrs. Hutton know her?"

"Your father must be well-gatekeeping, Nettie! It is only through her I heard of the situation. Her sister filed it for two years, and only felt to be married!"

"I had forgotten."

Up came the train. Susan Spargo, who had sometimes thought Janeta cold and a little nagative, quite repaid herself when the girl clung to her, with almost loving warmth, and flung her arms round Nathalie as though she could not bear to say good-bye.

"You must come to me if Mrs. Carlyle doesn't suit you," said Miss Spargo. "I have sent to the cottage for all your things, and I can find room for you, and work, too, till you meet with something you really like. So mind you don't decide in a hurry."

But that was just what Janeta had done. Some girls would have broken down when the strain of keeping their secret from friends' kind scrutiny was removed. Janeta did not do this; she was so used to have her feelings under control, so thoroughly accustomed to self-restraint, but for all that the effort told on her. She could not read the magazine she had taken up partly to screen her face. Its words seemed to dance before her eyes; she felt like a creature in a dream. She was only conscious of two things: every moment bore her further away from Normanton, and that for weal or woe her fate was decided.

It was a dreary journey. The train had very few passengers, for though the last day of August brings many families home from the sea-side, none of them seemed to have chosen this particular hour for travelling. There were no big, cheerful parties made up of sunburnt children and joyous mothers, no well-used spades and hard-worked buckets reposed in the ledge over Janeta's head, and the only other occupant of the carriage was a man who seemed quite as moody and preoccupied as herself.

She could hardly help looking at him, since he sat immediately opposite her. A tall, stately-looking man, with a thick, dark beard, a mass of curly, brown hair, and two dark, expressive grey eyes; a grave, thoughtful face, but not devoid of character and expression, a little stern, even cynical, about the mouth, but with truth stamped on every feature.

Janeta, half involuntarily, began comparing this face to that of the man who to-morrow would be her husband. She almost fancied the stranger resembled Lord Drew in figure

and bearing; but what a contrast they presented in all else!

The first idea which came to her in looking at her *vis-à-vis* was of strength. He looked so able, so powerful, as though he could bear his own burdens unflinchingly and other people's too. He was true; he would never break a confidence entrusted to him, she felt sure of that, and, if severe and satirical, he would be strictly just. His wife—if he had one—would be proud of him. No one would ever describe him as "making them laugh." No, he was no summer idler, but every inch a man; one a woman could respect even if he misjudged her—one whose praise, if hardly earned, would be worth having, and who would never stoop to deceit.

Janeta roused herself with a start. She had just been thinking this man would have married her openly and honourably before the whole world—have taken her at her father's hand, or wedded her in open defiance of Captain Leigh, but he would never have asked her to come to him in a way that could bring even a breath of scandal on her name.

She started in dismay. What had she done? Actually compared her *fiancé* to a stranger. Actually fancied herself engaged to a man she had never seen before. Woman-like, she was angry with herself, and, woman-like, she felt put out with the stranger who had been the innocent cause of her harmless folly.

She rose abruptly, meaning to change her seats to one at the other end of the carriage, but in rising she knocked down one of the stranger's parcels. There was no help for it. Nettie was a lady even when in a bad temper. She apologized, but her apology was spoken in the tones of an offended empress, and anyone seeing the two would have said she was the injured party.

"There's no harm done," said the stranger, tossing his property into the rack. "Shall I lend you a newspaper? You seem tired of this insupportable journey. I think this is the slowest line in England. I never travel on it without wishing myself anywhere else."

Nettie declined the paper. "I do not feel inclined to read. I am so tired."

He favoured her with a scrutinising glance. "You do look tired," he said, in a gentler tone. "But we shall be at Paddington in another half-hour, so you have not much more fatigue to undergo. Have you come far?"

"From Dorbury."

"The prettiest place in England. I have been staying there some time, and am enchanted with it. Lovely scenery, perfect air, and no need to speak to a human creature if you like. I can imagine people, tired out with excitement, coming to Dorbury for the sake of quiet. I don't believe anything ever happened there. The inhabitants proper sleep their lives away, and the visitors are content to do like them for the short time they stay."

Janeta blushed. Something had happened to her in Dorbury, so she could not endorse his verdict; she only said, gravely—

"I like the place. We were there a month and never got tired of it."

"I have been there three."

"I never saw you."

"I have been in London a good deal on business lately, and when I am in Dorbury I don't haunt the esplanade and the fashionable resorts; I am tired of crowds. When I go to the seaside I like to be quiet. Pleasure and fashion, amusement and excitement, are worth nothing at all. A man should learn to do without them, and depend upon his own resources, like Robinson Crusoe."

"Only we can't all find a desert island."

"I don't fancy many of us want to find one."

"I don't," said Janeta, compelled to the confession by something stronger than herself. "I should like to see the world, to know what its pleasures and temptations are, before I made up my mind to give them up."

He smiled, and it was wonderful how his whole face lighted up under the influence of that smile. The pity of it was faded season, and was replaced by a sneer, almost bitter in its cynicism.

"You are frank, at any rate," "Why shouldn't I be?" retorted Janeta. "It's not wicked to care for bright, beautiful things, and to wish for pleasure and amusement."

"And money," put in the stranger, coldly. "Don't forget that; you can't have the rest without it."

Nettie wondered if he was a wizard, and had probed her secret. She felt more ashamed of her longing for wealth than she had ever done before.

"People may love money too much," she admitted, gravely. "But it can't be wrong to like it just a little."

He laughed outright. "I never heard a young lady confess to the weakness before, at any rate."

"Oh! I should hate a miser as much as anyone could do; but I should like to be rich some day, and I don't see any harm in it."

"Why can't you be content as you are?" "Who told you I was not?"

"Your voice, I think. Besides, you say yourself you would like to be rich."

"And so I should," said Janeta, defiantly.

"Believe me, a moderate fortune is far better for pain in the end. I believe the happiest state is summed up in the old prayer of the heathen king, 'Neither poverty nor riches,' and I have tried both."

"Well, I have tried poverty," said Janeta, "and I am tired of it. For seven years I have been a kind of domestic slave in consideration of a good education, a fair supply of food, and a most limited allowance of dress. For seven years I have been taught by word, deed, and example that it is a sin and disgrace to be poor. For seven years I have been trampled on by people no better than myself, simply because they had money, and I had none. I am tired of it, and now I want to be rich."

"Poor child!" "I'm not a child," retorted Janeta; "and I don't need your pity."

"We shall meet again some day," he said, as he collected his belongings preparatory to leaving her. "This world is far smaller than people imagine, and our paths are sure to cross some day. I shall see then how you have fared, and what you have sacrificed to your ambition."

"I never said I was ambitious."

"You implied it. I don't ask you to take a stranger's warning. I don't generally set up to lecture young ladies; but there is one thing I should like to say to you."

"Please say it."

"Be true to yourself. Never speak a falsehood, never act a lie, then, whatever comes, poverty or riches, you will be able to respect yourself. It doesn't matter what other people think of us, we can shun them, or run away from them, but there is one judgment we can't defy. We can't escape from that of our own heart."

He was gone. Ten minutes later the train steamed slowly into Paddington terminus, and the first thing Janeta saw was her lover, eagerly scanning carriage after carriage in search of her.

"My brave girl! I thought you would come."

She was trembling from head to foot. The stranger's warning had given her a sort of chill, and, besides, it was only now, walking by John Drew's side, she recognised what she had done.

Miss Spargo's presence at Gaversham, putting her into the London train, and, as it were, actually speeding her on her journey, had robbed her flight of any shame or terror. Now, as for the first time in seven years, she found herself in London, she realised dimly what she had done. She had broken away from her old moorings, and taken her fate

into her own hands by eloping with a man whom a month before she had never seen.

"I am so tired."

"Poor little girl!"

He patted her hand approvingly, but the caress did not restore her courage; she was almost in tears.

"Where does Mrs. Hutton live?"

"At Brixton."

"Well, then, I must not keep you long, for you have a wearisome drive before you. Sit down here for a few moments while I explain to you what I have done."

The arrangements were very simple. The license and ring were ready, the clergyman and clerk warned their services would be needed at half-past ten the next morning. All Janeta needed to device was some excuse to leave Brixton alone, and go up to London without her friend's companionship.

"There are a dozen excuses you might make," said her lover. "Say you want to do some shopping, or to make some calls."

Janeta shivered.

He was putting falsehoods into her mouth. That other man, whose very name she did not know, had urged her to be true to herself; nothing else mattered.

"I will manage it," she said, quickly. "Have no fear. Where shall I meet you?"

"I will be in the booking-office at Ludgate-hill a few minutes after ten. You will not fail me, Janeta?"

It was the first time he had called her by her quaint, old-fashioned name. Hitherto she had been only "Nettie." It seemed to make things more real to give him a new claim on her.

"I will not fail you."

There were a dozen questions moving on her lips, but they were hard to put when he gave her no assistance.

She wanted to know where they were going after the ceremony that made them one. Then, too, her luggage; she had now with her only the things she had need at Dorbury; the rest was at Normanton Hall. If she followed his directions implicitly, it seemed to her she would be separated from all her possessions.

Some would doubt at Mrs. Hutton's; others at Miss Spargo's. She would actually commence her married life with no clothes at all!

One question she did manage to put to him, and she was glad she had done so, for the answer removed some of her perplexity. Where was he staying now?

"Oh, I have rooms near the Strand. I've rented them for years, and I really think, Nettie, it will be pleasanter for us to settle down there for a little, before we go abroad. You've not seen much of London yet, and I am a famous ciccone; in fact, I've told my old landlady to expect us to-morrow evening!"

It was something to have gleaned a little of his plans.

But what a falling off after the brilliant visions of her dream!

No triumphant entry into Alandyke—no luxurious foreign tour; only simple London lodgings, and the merities of a common landlady.

Janeta felt weary and dispirited; perhaps she noticed it.

"I shall never forget what you are giving up for me," he whispered, holding her hand under cover of the darkness. "Heaven knows, my darling, I would like you to have a grand wedding, with everything money could provide, to show up your beauty, and hundreds of people to admire you; but I couldn't love you more, Nettie, if you came to me in white satin blazing with diamonds. You could not be dearer to me if you were a duke's daughter!"

He called a cab, and put her in it.

Her trunk was hoisted on to the roof; one kiss, and she was being borne away from him into the gathering darkness.

She robbed bitterly, poor child, as the cab rattled over the stones.

He went to dine at his club, with a few boon companions, to whom he did not even confide the fact that to-morrow was his wedding day.

Yet he loved her, and she never professed any love for him; therefore the world would blame her and count him innocent, and yet to my mind she suffered most. They were both playing with edged tools, but she had never deceived him. From the first she had told him she was penniless; even when she accepted him she confessed she did not love him. Reticence might be charged on both. She never told him she was marrying him for his title—to be Lady Drew of Alandyke. He never let her suspect he believed her an heiress.

It was a terrible mistake, and one for which they both paid dearly in the dark after-time that followed.

A blaze of light, warm, tender words of welcome, and Alice Hutton, once English teacher at Miss Spargo's, now the happy young wife of a rising doctor, greeted her ex-pupil as kindly as though she had been a dear and cherished sister.

Dr. Hutton was out—a critical case which might detain him till late—but a dainty, high-spirited lady, ready for the traveller; and the bright little hostess insisted on her sending up her things by a servant, and sitting down at once to do justice to it.

Mrs. Hutton (née Cooke) had been one of Janeta's staunch friends, sharing with Miss Spargo and Nathalie the girl's rare regard.

Perhaps Nettie had liked her, because their fates were not altogether dissimilar; for Alice Cooke and her sisters had all needed to work for their living, and had seemed as destitute of relations as Miss Leigh herself.

But they were different in disposition—made friends wherever they went, and, now, the last of them had left dependence for a home of her own.

"What a dear little house!" said Nettie, when she had been taken all over it, and duly admired the six-week-old son and heir. "And you do look so happy. I should say you were quite content?"

"Quite," said the young wife, rapturously. "You will understand it when you see Arthur."

"Arthur" made at most three hundred a-year.

His wife could not enter fashionable society or enjoy expensive amusements. Not by any stretch of the imagination could she be called rich; and yet Janeta found herself envying her friend when she saw the meeting between the married lovers.

Was it possible Lord Drew could ever be to her what Dr. Hutton was to Alice?

Would her face, after a year's matrimony, brighten at his coming? Should she listen for his step, and seek new satisfaction in his smile?

She understood now what Miss Spargo had meant in telling her she had better seek happiness than riches. She understood now why the old maid had told her love was better than money.

She might be Lady Drew, mistress of Alandyke, but would she ever know the joy of heart, the peace of mind, which had come to Alice Hutton?

There were tears in her dark eyes when she bade her friends good-night.

It was not too late, even yet. Still there was time to draw back.

She had but to stay safely at Brixton under Alice's guardianship. Lord Drew did not know the number of the house. Even if he tracked her there, what could he say but that she had promised to elope with him?

Alice was pitiful and gentle—the last woman in the world to reproach a fellow-creature.

She would see Lord Drew and tell him her friend's heart had failed her.

But, then, what remained?

Hard work and poverty, perhaps loneliness—for husbands like Dr. Hutton were not to be found every day.

Because Alice had made a love-match was no proof her friend would do the same.

No; whatever happened, she would keep to her bargain, and marry the recluse of Dorbury Sands.

She looked very pale and tired the next morning, and Alice Hutton in vain attempted to persuade her to defer her shopping.

"You know we want you to stay with us till you go to Mrs. Carlyle, so there is no hurry, dear!"

Janeta blushed crimson, but persisted in her resolution.

Mrs. Hutton fancied, perhaps, she wished to make a few little purchases before calling on her intended patroness in the afternoon.

It was on her lips to tell the girl Brixton shops could supply every possible requirement, but she refrained.

It came back to her suddenly that Janeta's two eldest cousins were both in London.

For five years of her life she had been domesticated with them as a sister. If she only regarded them as brothers it was natural she should desire to see them; but Mrs. Hutton had always fancied Mrs. Tremaine's firstborn felt no more fraternal regard for Janeta.

Perhaps, thought the happy young wife, they were actually engaged; and, of course, he would like to see her before she concluded any arrangements with Mrs. Carlyle.

Mr. Hutton came into the room as his wife stood at the window, watching Janeta as she walked down the street.

"Is not she pretty, Arthur? I always admired her, but she has grown quite beautiful since we parted. I don't think Mrs. Carlyle will keep her long."

"She is very attractive," replied the Doctor, "but she has something on her mind. What is the matter with her, Alice? I never saw anyone so absent, unless they were ill, in trouble, or"—he smiled archly—"in love!"

Little suspecting this conversation, Nettie walked briskly towards Brixton Station, and took a first-class ticket to Ludgate-hill.

"Single or return?" demanded the clerk.

"Single," said the girl, with a wild throbbing at her heart as she reflected that there would be no coming back to the little house where she had been welcomed so kindly.

As a lady of title, she might, perhaps, some day drive in her carriage to Brixton, and make a call in Josephine-avenue; but life there as Alice Hutton's humble friend was over for her for ever.

She looked her best on this fair September day, which was to change her into a peeress.

There are some women—very few—to whom excitement and agitation are becoming.

Janeta's eyes were only the brighter for the realises unconsciousness which consumed her.

Her cheeks were pink with excitement; she seemed to have thrown off the proud, forbidding manner she had always worn at Normanton, and to be simply a girl with a large, warm heart, full of hopes and longings.

She was very simply dressed, but, thanks to the purchases made before her visit to Dorbury, there was nothing shabby or antiquated about her.

Her grey dress was only of simple nun's veiling, but it fitted her slender figure like a glove; and among the soft, black lace folds round her throat Alice had fastened, with her own hands, a late, creamy rose of the variety which bloom twice in a season, the second time lingering with us almost into autumn; a black lace hat, a pair of long grey gloves, the colour of her dress, and Janeta's toilet is described.

She caught a train at once, and reached Ludgate-hill as the clock struck ten. She would probably have to wait, since it was earlier than the time specified; and surely it was a bad omen that she should be at the trying-place before her lover. But this annoyance was spared her, for as she came down the steps into the booking-office she saw him standing with his back towards her, apparently studying the contents bill of the *Daily Telegraph*.

The office was crowded with men passing through it to their daily toil. Nettie hardly knew in what words to announce her arrival; so she went up to him and touched his arm.

He turned at once, and a smile of triumph lit up his face.

"I thought you would come!"

He called a cab, and they drove off at once. Janeta calm, dignified, and self-possessed, Lord Drew painfully nervous. The bride wondered at her own impassiveness, and attributed her lover's agitation to thoughts of that other wedding planned years before, when he hoped to marry an Earl's daughter.

It might have shown her how little akin to love was her regard for Lord Drew, that she could actually conclude he was thinking of the Lady Claudine, and yet not feel one pang of jealousy.

"I wish Nathalie was here!"

He smiled at the words.

"I wish so, too, for your sake, Nettie. It is a strange wedding day for you, my dear."

"I don't mind," she said, staunchly, "I never did have things quite like other people. I should have liked," and she blushed, "to put on a white dress, but I dared not risk it. Alice would have thought me crazy if I had started for the City in a muslin."

"You look very pretty as you are, Nettie. What is there about you that fascinates me so?"

"I don't know," smiled Janeta, equably; "but I'm glad there is something in me to like. Do you know at Normanton Hall I used to wonder whether anyone would love me except Nathalie and Miss Spargo?"

"We must have Nathalie to spend her Christmas holidays with us, poor little thing!"

"If Miss Spargo forgives me. Do you know I think she will!"

"I am sure of it. Your father is the only person whose verdict I fear; but, after all, Nettie, when we are once married he must relent."

"Papa will not be angry," said Janeta, decidedly. "He never is angry. He is very forgetful and absent-minded. I think he very seldom remembers people he does not see; but he never was angry with me in his life."

Lord Drew looked unmistakably relieved.

"I am glad to hear it. Now, my darling!"

There is something pitifully sad to me in a stolen wedding, however much love there may be to gild its dreariness.

Looking on marriage, as we all must do if we think of it soberly, as a new, untried journey, as a pilgrimage of joy or sorrow, of difficulty or gladness, there is something unspeakably terrible in starting on this journey without a single familiar voice to wish us God-speed.

We need not have show and ostentation, the less money spent, the fewer strangers invited the better; but oh! let there be some near us on that day who care whether we are glad or sorry, who have known and loved us in the maiden life we are quitting for ever.

It was a dull old city church of the kind that are looked from Sunday to Sunday. The green-baize trappings of the pews were faded and moth-eaten, the white-washed walls were discoloured by dirt and damp.

There was nothing venerable or priestlike in the stout, apoplectic-looking curate who had just struggled into a crumpled surplice, nothing fatherly or trustworthy about the decrepit old clerk, who approached to greet the "happy pair."

Yet a marriage performed under their auspices was as legal as though Nettie had been wedded to Lord Drew in the beautiful old church of Normanton by the white-haired Vicar, who always seemed to have Heaven's peace stamped on his brow.

The curate was in a hurry, the clerk wanted to be off, so the service was hurried through rapidly; and before Janeta realised what had happened she was signing her name in a thick old register, whose entries for the last ten years had been few and far between.

Lord Drew watched her as she wrote her "Janeta Mary Leigh"; his own signature was shorter still, "John Drew," nothing else. He filled in his age as twenty-seven; his profession, and that of his father, he entered simply as

"gentleman," which nearly brought about a remonstrance from the apoplectic curate.

He had dismissed the cab, and did not suggest engaging another; so the newly-married pair walked soberly out into the London streets just as though they had been about nothing very particular, instead of having entered into a solemn contract, which death alone could break.

"We will go home," said Nettie's husband. "I want to show you the little sanatorium where I have spent so long. I little thought when I left it to go down to Dorbury that it was ever to greet my wife."

Nettie found the lodgings very different from her expectations. "Lodgings" at Normanton meant two or three shabby rooms in an equally shabby house; but the rooms in Cecil-street, whither she was conducted, were handsome, spacious apartments, furnished sumptuously, two of the windows looking on to the Embankment, the whole suite wonderfully quiet and retired, considering they were so near the heart of the great city.

A very respectable woman stood ready to greet them. She addressed the bridegroom simply as "Mr. Drew," and told the young wife he had stayed in her house "for years," and though she didn't often take ladies, she was quite ready to stretch a point to please such a good tenant.

Nettie decided Mrs. Rice had been a little mistaken in asserting Lord Drew passed half his time abroad, and the other half in encampments at the seaside, since this very estimable landlady spoke as though he had been her inmate for a good many months out of each twelve.

"Nettie!"

They had breakfasted (or lunched), the table was cleared, the door closed against intruders. Lord Drew had led the way to the farthest end of the long sitting-room, and placed his wife on a sofa near the window and commanding a view of Father Thames, and the many boats passing and repassing along his silent waters.

"I want to talk to you, dear."

She smiled assent. It was coming then—the story of his life, of his future plans, of the home where he would take her. She gave him one glance of deep interest, and let her little hand glide confidently into his.

"I am listening, John."

"Don't you think you had better write to your father this afternoon. I don't quite know when the next mail goes, but it will do no harm to have a letter ready so as to catch it." Janeta stared at him in amazement.

"There is a post every evening," she said, quietly; "the boxes are cleared at six o'clock, I believe."

"Every evening! You must be dreaming, child. The mail to Antigua only goes once a fortnight."

"Antigua!"

"I understood Mr. Duval's plantations were there."

"But what should we want to write to him about?" demanded Janeta. "He is Nathalie's father, and for her sake I daresay he will be kind to me when he comes home; but I have never seen him. Why should he care to know I am married?"

"Nathalie's father!"

The truth broke on Janeta like a flash of lightning.

"I see it all!" she said gravely. "You thought I was Nathalie. You believed you were going to marry Mr. Duval's heiress! But I told you myself I was penniless. I told you my name was Janeta Leigh."

"I thought you were trying to test my affection," he confessed. "Heiresses are often suspicious. They sometimes pretend to be poor just to make sure they are loved for themselves alone."

"And you thought I was an heiress?"

"I thought you were Miss Duval. My darling, don't look at me with those great frightened eyes. I love you, indeed I do. You won't

whole heart, though I believed I had lost it to the West Indian heiress."

Every tinge of colour died out of Janeta's face. She breathed hard, as though in pain.

"It will not matter," she said, wistfully. "You are so rich yourself you will not need a wealthy wife."

"So rich!" He looked bewildered. "Who told you so?"

"Mrs. Rice."

"I never set eyes on her. What romance did she weave about me?"

"She told me everything. About your losing Lady Claudine, and being poor and—"

"She told you, in fact, that I was Lord Drew?"

Janeta bowed her head.

"It is a comedy of errors!" said the bridegroom, with a mirthless laugh. "I have neither wealth nor title. I am plain John Drew; by profession, an artist; by practice, nothing. I have three hundred a year all told, and am over head and ears in debt. For years I have been thinking of marrying an heiress, but all the rich girls I met were so desperately ugly, and then, when I saw you, I found out what love meant!"

"You believe me?" she said, in a dull, far-off sort of tone. "You know I never meant you to think I was Miss Duval."

"I believe you implicitly. I won't deny I had at times a wish you should take me for my cousin, but I loved you, Janeta. I love you now, even though to-day's work will be my undoing."

She turned on him then with flashing eyes. "Your undoing! How?"

"The struggle was hard enough as a bachelor, but marriage is looked on almost as a crime in our rank of life when a man is as poor as I am. It is a sorry fate I have brought you to, my darling."

"And you regret it?"

He hesitated, and then assured her he only deplored it for her sake; but his protestations came too late. She had noticed the momentary pause, and understood.

She had never loved him, but she had meant to do her duty, and be a true, faithful wife to him. At this moment she despised him, and rose and stood before him, beautiful as he had never before seen her, with something new, some strange, pathetic indignation shining in her eyes.

"You do regret it," she said, quietly. "You wish even now this morning's work could be undone. Well, I wish so, too. If only I could set you free I would give years of my own life to do it. I would die gladly!"

"Don't talk of dying," commanded her husband. "We shall weather the storm somehow. There are heaps of people in the world as poor as we are, and they don't wish to die."

He thought he had soothed her. He was terribly disappointed himself, but he had no wish to vent his displeasure on her.

He had not been generous enough to hide his vexation, but he was willing to say no more of it.

He sat talking to her for another half-hour, then he told her he should go down to his club and ask for his letters. She had better unpack (he quite forgot she had no luggage) and write to her father.

He turned back twice as he was leaving the room, and saw her seated motionless as a statue, her beautiful eyes seeming to see nothing nearer than the beautiful river.

He closed the door on her with a strange reluctance. Some vague misgiving made him loth to leave her, but he was need to gratify his own wishes, and so he started for his club.

Arrived there, he met first one and then another of his acquaintance, and time passed far more swiftly than he imagined, so that it was three hours after he had gone out when he returned to Cecil-street, and only wanted five minutes to the time at which he had ordered dinner.

He opened the door with a latchkey, and went upstairs to the room where he had left

his wife. It was empty! The table stood laid for dinner, but there was no sign of Nettie. He went into the bedroom; the same still, deserted aspect. He rang the bell hastily, and the girl who waited on him said, in reply to his questions, that Mrs. Drew had gone out only ten minutes after himself. He postponed dinner and waited. Eight o'clock, nine o'clock, but no Nettie!

Midnight at last, and still no sign of her return. John Drew shivered as one stricken with a sudden fear. She had said she would gladly die; she had fixed her eyes on the river as though she longed for a refuge beneath its restless waves. What if she had sought it? He was not a good man; years had passed since he uttered a prayer, but as this awful dread entered his mind he threw himself on his knees and prayed—as earnestly as the most devout Christian could have done—that his girl-wife's death might not be at his door. So ended Janeta's wedding-day.

(To be continued.)

LUIDUILTE'S LOVERS.

—10:—

CHAPTER IV.

NOT far from the house wherein Mdlle. D'Almaine and her niece were residing Llanoe and his tutor had taken up their abode in the house of an old Jesuit priest, a friend of Dalziel's.

Some days had elapsed since that evening when Llanoe had startled Luiduilte into a confession of her love in the soft hush of the gloaming, but still the girl had not received permission to tell the story to her aunt.

Not a day passed but they met either in the gardens or driving, at the theatre or their own home; and Luiduilte, honest and perfect in her love, never doubted, waiting patiently until such time as Llanoe should deem it advisable to speak.

One afternoon when Llanoe called Mademoiselle was alone, Luiduilte having joined a party of friends in an excursion to the woods at Fontainebleau; and Mdlle. D'Almaine rose with evident pleasure to receive her visitor. She was not quite satisfied with Llanoe.

He appeared to love her niece with an all-absorbing love; her niece evidently loved him. Why, then, did he not declare himself?

All these weeks she had watched closely, and now that the opportunity had come she determined to try the effects of a little jealousy upon him.

"I am charmed to see you, Lord Vermont," she said, motioning him to a seat at the same time; "but I fear the pleasure will not be mutual. I am alone."

"Can Mdlle. D'Almaine deem me so ungrateful as to feel bored in her society?" asked Llanoe, smiling.

Yet there was an undercurrent of disappointment in his voice which she would not heed. His attentions to her niece were becoming noticeable, and must either be stopped or be accounted Luiduilte's right.

Alas! how often do our best friends cause us the greatest sorrow by means of ill-chosen interference!

Had Mdlle. D'Almaine remained silent on that quiet spring day the story of Luiduilte's life might have ended, ah, how differently!

Luiduilte wandering in the sweet shady woods, giving back laugh for laugh, repartee for repartee, knew not on what a dark, troublous sea her lifeboat was launched that day!

"Your words reassure me, for I would not have you think too much of my niece. She has many lovers, and it would not be wise to allow yourself to—"

"Pardon me, Mademoiselle," interrupted Llanoe, flushing hotly. "I did not mean to imply that I was indifferent to your niece's charm or to herself. Have you any objection to me that you speak so?"

"None; only my niece must be sought openly. There is one with whom she has gone to-day who would, I feel assured, be all I could wish as a husband, and the son of a dear friend. You know him—François Rouget," returned Mademoiselle, significantly.

"You approve him?"

"Most decidedly. And now let us to other topics. Have you been to see the new opera over which Paris is going mad?"

So the conversation drifted into other channels, but its effect did not wear off, and Mademoiselle would have been considerably astonished at the meaning her words and manner had conveyed to him, namely, that she had no objection to him, but would greatly prefer François Rouget as a nephew-in-law; and when they had exhausted nearly every topic, and Llanoe rose to take his leave, he told himself that he had not done wrong to keep his love secret from Mademoiselle, since she had no sympathy with it.

Colonel Dalziel met him as he descended the steps, and the keen gray eyes saw at once that something had upset the young fellow's careless, debonnaire ease, and his guilty heart gave a quick throb.

"Our one-time hostess well and charming as ever?" he asked, carelessly, pausing to knock the ash off the end of his cigar, and then resuming his leisurely pace.

"Well she certainly is, but as to being charming, there are two sides to that question," retorted Llanoe, with a short, bitter laugh, the first of its kind his tutor had ever heard issue from his lips; and then, after his old fashion, Llanoe unburdened himself to the Colonel, never doubting but that he would give wholesome and good advice.

"Come where we can talk unmolested," said Colonel Dalziel, leading him up a by-street, where the roar of voices and the rush of vehicles came to them in a dull hum.

The Colonel felt that the time was come for him to mature his plans. He had thought the matter well over before, so he had no difficulty in this moment.

"Have you nothing to say?" cried Llanoe, a trifle irritably.

The thought of losing Luiduilte, who loved him, whose soft, coy lips had met his own in responsive passion, had ruffled the usually serene temper.

He would not, could not, give her up; and yet he felt sure that if Mademoiselle really desired Luiduilte's union with this young Frenchman, she would bring it about somehow.

"I have so much to say, my dear boy, that it is only where to begin puzzles me!" replied the Colonel, taking the cigar from between his lips, and looking intently at the glowing point.

"Start, then."

"Well, in the first place, were I a peer of the realm, and in your case, I would put all possibility of failure out of the way by wedding the lady of my choice in private. The lady is of good family—eligible in every way. Once yours, you could wait until you became of age to claim her. Of course I am supposing the lady reciprocates your affections."

There was a dead silence between them after the utterance of these words.

The early spring afternoon was closing in, and night's grey mantle was being gradually drawn across the city. Here and there a light flashed out from the dusk, and sounds of laughter, with snatches of song, echoed along the handsome streets.

Llanoe and Colonel Dalziel were alone in the quiet of the dusk-lit street—the tempter and the tempted.

In all that great city, alive with human creatures, there was no one to whom he could go for sympathy save this man.

Llanoe's love for Luiduilte was pure and strong, but the thought that her aunt would use her influence to induce her to wed with François Rouget roused the cruel passion for possession, no matter by what means, that is

latent in every man; and the strength and purity of his love rendered no other thought possible save marriage.

Yet to wed his darling in secret, only because he had made a promise to his mother to bring no wife home until he came of age! He would be breaking his vow in the spirit and in deed.

Why not?

But Mademoiselle would oppose the union. She had as good as told him so.

Colonel Dalziel's voice, coldly sarcastic, and with a spice of taunting in its tones, broke in upon his reverie.

"Bah! Win her without marriage if you fear to bring down the mater's anger, or perhaps —"

"Dalziel, do you want me to strike you?"

The clear blue eyes were black with passion as he turned, with clenched fists, towards the motionless figure of his tempter.

"No. I have more regard for my beauty than you seem to think. But, seriously, if you do not like my plan let it pass; only when you hear that the young Rouget, or some other Frenchman has carried her off, remember that I told you of a way of preventing it."

Lance made no reply to this, but, as he turned and walked back to the busy thoroughfare, the keen, watchful eyes of his companion saw the proud lips set themselves firmly, and the clear boyish eyes wore a look of determination new to them.

"Could *père Balzaine* perform such a ceremony legally?" he asked, carelessly, after a time, and Colonel Dalziel's wicked heart stood still for very joy.

His plot would be carried out to the very letter if only Lance could win Luiduillie's consent; and he had little or no fear of that, seeing the look of passionate love in the girl's eyes as they had rested on him that morning in the *Champs Elysées*.

"Yes."

Wicked and unscrupulous as he was, he could not force more than that monosyllable from his lips.

"I will speak to Luiduillie. After all there will be no great harm in it, and Mademoiselle has only herself to blame," observed Lance, trying to ease his conscience by thus reasoning.

"Only herself; and surely an English lord is better in the social scale than a French count?" laughed the Colonel.

That evening he sought the old priest in his own private apartment, and the two sat talking for some two hours, the Jesuit rubbing his fat, white hands with great unction, and laughing a quiet, fat laugh every now and again, while the Colonel leaned back in his low, easy chair rolling cigarettes with exclusive care, as he unfolded his plans. And Lance Grey in his own room, struggling hard to study and put the fair face of Luiduillie out of his mind, never dreamed of the pitfall being dug for him.

Like the treacherous bogs of Ireland, its surface was covered with fair flowers, and so he went forward to gather the blossoms without thought of what lay beneath them. Oh! how truly has our loved Scotch poet sung,—

"Oh what a tangled web we weave
When first we practise to deceive!"

CHAPTER V.

"MIGNONNE!"

It was Lance who uttered these words, and with a quick, eager tenderness, which is ever so gratifying to the ears of a woman who loves.

Some days had passed since that interview with *Mlle. D'Almaigne*, but though they had met often he had had no opportunity of speaking with her alone; and now that he found her seated in the embrasure of the window amid the flowers which were *Mademoiselle's* hobby, all the pent-up feeling flashed out in eyes and voice.

Alone did we say?

Not really so; for François Rouget had lifted the heavy curtain that draped a door at the farther end of the large room just as Lance had entered by the other.

No malice or revenge showed in his face at the glad cry of welcome from the girl as the term of endearment fell upon her ears; only a look of intense pity and pain darkened his eyes. Then the curtain fell from his nerveless hand, and the two lovers were really alone; for François Count De Pastraine would not play the part of eavesdropper.

"Why have you avoided me these few days, *ma petite*? Do you not know that one cold look from those dark eyes gives a thousand wounds?" whispered Lance, taking the small hand that toyed nervously with a spray of oleander, and imprisoning it in his own clasp.

"I have not avoided you, Lance. There are so many people always round me, and I cannot tell them to go," replied Luiduillie, lifting her eyes, dusky with love, to his face, and laying her free hand upon his shoulder.

"Darling, I am jealous of every glance my sweet bestows upon another!"

"Jealous without cause. Lance, will you believe that my whole soul's love is yours? The joy or sorrow of my life is in your keeping. I know not whether you will mete out sorrow or pain; but this I know, for no other man will my heart beat as it beats at your approach—no other man will ever see love written in my eyes save you, my Lance! Is it very hard to believe that a woman can love so?"

Luiduillie spoke in low, passionate tones, that thrilled her lover's heart with exultant gladness; and there was a solemnity in the young face, with its pure unstained soul shining in every lineament, in the serious steadfast eyes that calmed his troubled heart.

In the bitter days that followed he remembered those words, and the pure, truthful glance of the girl who uttered them, and wondered if he were not mad.

Mademoiselle was out, and there was no fear of their being interrupted for quite half-an-hour. For some time their conversation ran in much the same groove as that of other lovers, their every thought coincident; their wishes, aspirations; and yet in the aftertime they could doubt.

Gradually they came round to their friends, and spoke of how they would receive the intelligence of their betrothal; then the one wish in Lance's heart took words.

"*Mlle. D'Almaigne* will not approve, for she herself told me she desired a union between François Rouget and yourself."

"Lance, you must be mistaken. She likes you. She has told me so herself!" cried Luiduillie.

"She likes me, I know; but she has told me that her desire is that you should wed the Count. Will you give me up at her instigation, Luiduillie? I am not of age till I am twenty-five, and there is no knowing what my mother and guardians would do if they heard of our engagement, and that Mademoiselle, your aunt, was averse to it. Tell me, can you give me up?"

He had risen now, and stood before her, holding her little hands, which had grown deadly cold, in his, while his blue eyes grew black with the intensity of his emotion.

Twice Luiduillie strove to speak, but the words would not come; then, as he made a gesture as of despair, the lovely lips parted, and she spoke in a low, frightened voice.

"Why do you speak so, Lance? What is it you would have me do? I am under the guardianship of my aunt, and she will prevent our marriage if she does not approve. Oh, Lance, will they part us?"

"Not if my love is brave. No one shall part us. Listen."

And hurriedly and passionately he unfolded his plan that, one morning, after visiting her pensioners she should be met by a carriage, which would bear her to a little village on the

outskirts, where a priest would be in waiting. They would be married, and, returning to Paris, declare all to her, seek her forgiveness, which she would readily accord when she found that they were married.

The girl did listen with a look of startled pain that struck to Lance's heart.

"Lance!" she cried out in a piteous whisper, love for him struggling with love for her aunt, and her strong sense of what was due to her.

"Dearest, I would not ask if I thought they would give you to me; but I feel sure that I shall lose you. You know Dalziel is my friend; he would do anything to promote my happiness."

Poor Lance!

"Well, he often calls upon Mademoiselle in the mornings, as you, doubtless, know, when I am at my studies, and he tells me that Mademoiselle expressed her intention of asserting her authority as guardian, in order to force you into a marriage with Rouget."

"Let me think, Lance. I cannot decide all at once," said Luiduillie, putting her hand to her head with a gesture piteous in its simple, child-like entreaty.

Vainly she strove to think calmly; the only thought that seemed to stand out clearly was that of parting with Lance.

Could she part from him? No! Then she must yield to his request. Oh, why had her aunt taken this fancy into her head about François Rouget!

Never for one moment had a doubt of her aunt's feelings towards Lance entered her mind, and it came upon her with bewildering force, this statement that she had always intended these two to marry.

And never for one moment did a doubt of Gregory Dalziel's truth and sincerity enter either of their minds.

Both believed that he wished to promote their happiness, and that in telling Mademoiselle's wishes and helping in the scheme of a secret wedding he was acting the part of a loyal friend.

"We English are stigmatised as cold, and of not knowing the meaning of the word 'passion.' Yet I would not hesitate to risk all for love," whispered the rich, persuasive voice that had caused the first fluttering of emotion in the innocent, girlish heart.

The full afternoon sun shone in a flood of golden glory on the clear-cut patrician face, with its crown of yellow curls, and the true Saxon eyes looked down into hers with a glance of power and entreaty in them.

What woman could have resisted the pleading of such a voice, the lovelight in such eyes!

With a faint but deep indrawn sigh Luiduillie laid her hands in his.

"I have given you my life's love, Lance," she said, quietly, but with a rich flush on cheek and brow. "It is not much to give you myself as well. You will let me tell my aunt directly?"

"Directly we return. But, *ma mignonne*, promise me that you will let me take you to her and confess our crime," with a low, happy laugh.

He had no cares now.

Luiduillie would be his in spite of a dozen aunts, and he would soon make it all right with the mater when she found the irrevocable step had been taken.

Strangely enough, the fact of Luiduillie being an heiress, and shortly about to return to England, had never reached Lance's ears.

Fate plays strange tricks, and surely she never played a more unkind one than in keeping this knowledge from Lord Vermont. How different all things would have been!

It was not all fancy on Lance's part that *Mlle. D'Almaigne* looked coldly upon him of late.

Though she had taken a great fancy to him, she had begun to think that he was only playing with her niece's feelings, and more than once she had thought that a union with the young Count would better ensure Luiduillie's happiness.

But she did not arrive at this conclusion unaided.

Colonel Dalziel had made the most of his morning visits, and by dint of little allusions to certain episodes of their journey through Rome had conveyed to her an impression that Llanoe was going to flirting, if nothing worse.

Very shortly after Llanoe had extracted that promise from Luiduile, Mademoiselle entered the room, followed by François Rouget.

She greeted Lord Vermont very coldly, looking into the girl's face the while.

"I did not expect to meet you here, Lord Vermont!" she observed. "We just met Colonel Dalziel, and he told me that you were hard at work in your study!"

"So he thought, I daresay," replied Llanoe, with a bright laugh; "but the world looked so bright outside, I had to throw away the dull old books and come out."

He did not say it was the brightness of a pair of dark eyes that had drawn him out; but Mdlle. D'Almaine seemed to infer this by her reply, and he flushed hotly under her calm, steady gaze.

"You found enough brightness here, my lord!" she said, looking across at Luiduile, then back at him. "I think the young should study while they are the young. We grow old soon enough," she went on, gravely.

"That is a good hint, and I think I will try to regain your good thoughts by returning to my neglected studies," rejoined he; and he took his leave with the easy grace and frankness of manner that constituted one of his great charms.

"Luiduile," said her aunt, turning to her with more severity of look and tone than she had ever done during the long years they had spent together, "do you know how you are compromising yourself by receiving the attentions of Lord Vermont, and allowing him to visit you when I am from home?"

"Compromising, auntie?" echoed the girl, lifting her head haughtily, and flashing a questioning glance at the pale, grave face of the young Count.

He had confessed his love to her. What if he were poisoning her aunt's mind against Llanoe?

"Yes, I repeat it, compromising yourself; and, Luiduile, I have never thwarted you before in any way! Hear me, and listen to reason. You must let Lord Vermont see that his attentions are not welcome," said Mademoiselle, calmly.

"What if they are welcome? What if I cannot obey you, auntie? You were young yourself, and must have loved once. Oh! auntie, do not be cruel!" cried the girl, lifting her small hands appealingly, and going forward to where Mdlle. D'Almaine stood.

"Luiduile," was the gravely spoken response, "I have good reason for all I say, and," laying her hand gently, but firmly, on the girl's shoulder, and gazing down into the dark eyes, dusky with passion and troubled thought, "should you disobey me, I shall exercise my authority as guardian."

The girl's face grew pale as marble, and a shiver ran through her, but she made no other sign of the emotion that shook her as a tempest shakes the forest tree.

The impulse came to her to confess her love for Llanoe and his for her, and to beg, if needs be, on bended knees for her benediction; but remembering her aunt's last words she kept back those that rushed to her own lips.

Oh! why did she not yield to that impulse? Why did she force back the pleading that would have won for her a life of calm happiness?

She feared separation from Llanoe, and had not her aunt said, "she must show Lord Vermont that his attentions were unwelcome!"

How could she know that Mdlle. D'Almaine's advice had been sought by Colonel Dalziel about an *affaire de cœur* of Llanoe's, and whose details only hinted at, but sufficiently clear to horrify the pure mind of Mademoiselle, were fresh in her mind when she entered the sit-

ting room and found the English lord, so young in years, so old in vice, so comely of person, and with such an evil soul, seated in close and intimate conversation with her innocent, pure-minded niece?

This story, which Colonel Dalziel trusted might never come to his mother's ears, was his *grande coup*, and it had taken.

Llanoe was now a worthless young *roué* in Mademoiselle's eyes, and she determined on keeping him and her niece apart in future.

Luiduile stood for some minutes perfectly motionless, a rare, lovely picture, with the sunlight catching the rich amber of her dress and nestling among the dark, rippling hair; then she looked steadily into her aunt's face with eyes that shone with a woman's deep passions—eyes that told of love, truth, and purity.

"I will not make you any promise, auntie, for I might not be able to keep it," she said, in a low, clear voice. "I have never told you a falsehood yet, and it is not in my womanhood that I shall learn to do so!"

They had both forgotten François Rouget, and after a few moments he had stolen quietly out of the room.

"What do you mean, child?" cried Mademoiselle, a little startled by the look on her niece's face, and the calm determination of the lovely eyes gazing so firmly into her own.

"Only what I say, auntie. Remember, I have made you no promise," repeated Luiduile. "Now may I go to my room?"

"Yes, child, and try to rest," returned Mademoiselle. "I wonder what she means by talking so solemnly of not making any promise!" thought Mdlle. d'Almaine when she found herself alone.

There was an uncomfortable sensation of coming evil in her mind—what some term a presentiment.

But the idea of a secret marriage never even flitted across her imagination, and soon her mind was occupied with preparations for Luiduile's visit to England, it having been arranged that she should leave France in the autumn, accompanied by her aunt.

Mademoiselle thought it was better that she should have time to become acquainted with her tenantry before she was presented and whirled into the vortex of London society.

It had dawned on Marie D'Almaine's mind that Llanoe was unaware of the social position of her niece; and, believing what she did of his character, she purposely refrained from enlightening him, lest, finding that she was of such ancient and pure blood, he should seek her as his wife.

Not to Luiduile's pure ears could such a tale be told as Colonel Dalziel, in his apparent perplexity, had hesitatingly poured into hers. Luiduile, she told herself, must rest content with her statement that he was worthless.

When Luiduile found herself alone in her own room, she stood still gazing round the exquisitely-appointed apartment which she had chosen as her boudoir as one in a dream.

What was all this trouble and secrecy about? Llanoe and she loved one another; they were both of good birth. Why should her aunt seek to separate them? She had always known that there was a taint of strong determination in her aunt's character; but that she should use it against herself, and to merely indulge one of her own fancies, puzzled and pained the girl beyond expression.

She went across to the window, where a *jardinière* of rare exotics made a sweetly-perfumed screen, and kneeling on the seat of an amber velvet *prie-dieu*, bowed her head on her hands.

She did not, as of old, take out her image of the Virgin and pray to it; much of the image worship of her religion had been put aside since knowing Llanoe, though she was still a Roman Catholic; but there went up a cry to Heaven for guidance and forgiveness which would surely be heard, no matter what lips had uttered it.

A long, long time did she kneel there, and

the rich golden sunlight that fell aslant the handsome white houses of this street in Paris crept in at her window, and nestled among the folds of her amber robe, lingering, too, on the graceful head, with its wealth of tress, as though that still, kneeling figure had found favour in its sight.

After a time she lifted her head, and the sunlight showed a face strangely like, yet unlike, the lovely half-child face of the Luiduile, who had stood under the shade of the acacias in the Chateau D'Almaine in —. More beautiful than ever, with that look of womanly pride and resolution upon it, yet giving an idea of sorrow, for the wondrous eyes were heavy with pain.

This clandestine marriage was bitterly repugnant to her sensitive feelings; but her great love for Llanoe, and the fear of being parted for all time, overcame this, and she determined of telling Llanoe as much of her aunt's conversation as she deemed wise at the first opportunity. And the opportunity came soon.

One day, when Luiduile had been going her rounds visiting her pensioners, she met Llanoe just as she had nodded good-bye to the concierge at the door of the house where her last visit had been paid.

She was feeling rather tired after mounting so many flights of steep stairs, for of course, all her people lived on the attic floors; and when Llanoe offered to call a cab for her she felt, as she told him, "glad to avail herself of it."

Her aunt always blamed her for not taking the carriage, but Luiduile felt somehow that to drive about giving alms savoured of ostentation.

"May I accompany you?" asked Lord Vermont, never thinking that there was ought to cavil at in the act; and Luiduile innocently bowed assent.

"I wished to see you alone," she observed, as the horse's head was turned in the direction of home; and then, briefly and gently, she told him her aunt's commands, keeping back what would have best been told in her love, for fear of hurting him, namely, that her aunt had told her he was worthless, and bore a character which no good man ever earned.

"You will consent to all I have asked, then," he whispered, bending over eagerly. "Luiduile, my darling, do not hesitate. I have had a letter saying that my only sister is ill, and that I am to be prepared for a journey home in case of need. Let us make arrangements to-day with Père Balzaine, and to-morrow we can be made man and wife."

The lovely face grew quiet and cold while he poured these words in her ears; but the great dark eyes that were fixed on his handsome face showed the conflict going on within, and the little hands that went up to her heart with a swift, passionate suddenness trembled like a leaf.

"Answer me, dearest; is it yes or no?" and Luiduile, bending her proud dark head to hide the rush of crimson that dyed her cheeks and brow, murmured softly,—

"Yes!"

When they arrived at the house wherein Mademoiselle and her niece had all the best rooms, Llanoe jumped out quickly, and whispered, as he assisted Luiduile to alight,—

"I will not come in now. I must go at once and arrange everything. *Au revoir, ma mignonne.*" and with a low, almost reverential bow he jumped back into the vehicle and was soon whirled out of sight—a wonderful feat for a French cabman to perform.

Mdlle. D'Almaine's voice, cold and stern with displeasure, greeted the girl as she entered the handsome sitting-room which overlooked the street.

"So, Mdlle. Luiduile Dene, you are not content with receiving Lord Vermont here during my absence, which might be, from accident, as he is known to call upon me also, when alone, but you must ride about with him

along in a hired cab. Do you know, foolish girl, what you are doing?"

Never in all her life had Luidnite seen her aunt so moved by anger, and she trembled beneath the weight of it, feeling as if about to lose her senses.

She knew nothing of the French customs and notions of propriety.

In those bright, careless days at her aunt's chateau in — no idea of vice or sin had come to her, and she walked amidst the glaring wickedness of the gay Paris unharmed, unknowing; and so she could not understand the Frenchwoman's horror at her apparently innocent act.

(To be continued.)

THE MYSTERIOUS BABY.

— o —

We had just taken our seats at the tea-table one evening, when a flash of lightning and a heavy peal of thunder told us that the storm we had been expecting all day had at last broken over the city with a fury which betokened it was no passing shower, and bade us expect a long and terrible tempest.

No chance of interruption to-night, I thought, as I opened the pages of a work of my favourite author, and seated myself in my little easy-chair. I was mistaken, however, for hardly had I perused three sentences when a ring, hard and imperative, sounded through the house.

"Who can it possibly be on such a night as this?" I said, running to open the door myself, while Mr. Psalter, my husband, followed me into the hall, for the same idea had taken possession of our minds at the same moment, namely, that some accident had happened to my brother Tom's family, and that he had sent for us. Tom himself stood, indeed, upon the doorstep, wet to the skin, and holding a large bundle in his arms, which he extended towards me, with the laconic observation, —

"Take it."

I received the burden, but almost dropped it again, so overcome was I with astonishment, for, if you will believe me, it was nothing more nor less than a young—a very young—baby.

"I do not wonder that you are surprised, Emma," said Tom, in answer to my start, I suppose, for I had not spoken. "Just wrap it up in something dry, and I'll tell you all about it."

"You know, I suppose," he began, "that I have been up to Newark for a few days, but you do not know that I returned this morning about five o'clock. Just as I stepped from the train, I noticed a woman with a baby in her arms, who was walking in the same direction with myself. We had proceeded some distance, when she turned suddenly, and began to ejaculate, —

"'Billy! Billy! where is little Billy? Have you seen a little boy with a blue jacket and a straw hat following me, sir?'"

"I replied in the negative.

"'Oh, dear!' she exclaimed, with every appearance of genuine alarm; 'oh, dear! I must have left him behind. Won't you be so kind as to hold this baby, sir—I'll not be gone two minutes—while I run after him? Oh, Billy! Billy!'"

"I never for one moment suspected that the woman was acting, her alarm seemed so perfectly natural; so I took the baby, and she went after Billy!"

"And stayed, I suppose?" I interrupted.

"Yes—she did not come back," replied Tom; "although I waited for two hours, until that terrible rain came on, when I decided to bring the child here. I declare I could not believe I had been taken in, she was such a respectable-looking woman!"

I laughed.

"What do you intend to do with the baby? And why did you not take it home to Jane in the first place?"

Tom looked confused.

"Well," he said, after a pause, "I have heard Jane express some peculiar opinions on such subjects, and, to tell you the truth, I did not know how she might take it."

I was very, very foolish, or I never would have given my consent to such a thing; but, somehow, against my own better judgment, I acquiesced in the arrangement, and when the storm had in some measure subsided, Tom departed, leaving the child in my care.

Such an unmanageable, ill-tempered baby was never seen before, I do believe. It cried—and no wonder—all night. I was fairly worn out before morning.

After breakfast I examined the baby's clothes. They were of good quality, and well made. Evidently, the poor child had not belonged to very poor people, and had been properly taken care of. I was much puzzled to account for its desertion.

After dressing and feeding the babe I lay down on my lounge in hopes of enjoying a little rest; but scarcely had my head touched the pillow when the girl informed me that I was "wanted in the parlour." I obeyed the summons, and found Tom waiting for me. He was in great trepidation. Jane was coming to spend the afternoon with me, and he begged me very earnestly to keep his secret just a little while.

"But how shall I account for the baby?" I inquired.

"Oh, say it has been left in your care—make some excuse for its presence. Women can always invent reasons for everything. All I wish is, do not tell Jane until I ask you to."

I promised obedience, but I must confess, with many misgivings, and some compunction of conscience.

Sister-in-law came that afternoon, as Tom had predicted. She was in a very bad humour, and brought an intricate piece of crochet-work in her basket.

"There, don't ask me how I am," was her first salutation. "No one has who has to bear such things as I have, can be well."

"Dear me, what has happened?" I inquired.

"Don't ask me," replied sister-in-law.

"He is your brother, and I won't expose him. I won't mention the time he comes home at night, and I'll say nothing about his temper; and I won't even allude to the fact that I can't have a dressmaker in the house but he must say she is good-looking. But I will say, what I bear no one else would put up with for a moment." And sister-in-law plied her crochet-needle with redoubled energy.

I was about to make some consolatory remark, when the girl opened the door, and putting her head in, exclaimed, at the top of her voice, —

"You'll have to come, Mrs. Psalter. I can't do nothin' with that young'un."

There was no help for it now, so I was obliged to inform sister-in-law that a friend of mine had left a baby in my care for a few days.

"Well, you must be of a very obliging disposition to take care of so young a child," said sister-in-law. "It's more than I would do."

I began to be of her opinion at last, and the more so, as the child began to scream passionately, and manifest the greatest dislike and disgust to all present. Various means of pacification, which occupied the whole afternoon, were tried in vain. The child was evidently pining for its mother, and would not be comforted. Just as the gentlemen arrived in the evening it sunk into an uneasy nap, and I descended to the parlour.

Sister-in-law had taken my little daughter Fanny on her knee, and Tom was walking restlessly about the room, while Psalter lounged on the sofa, and Tom looked out of the window.

"Well, that is a nice little baby, isn't it,

Fanny?" were the first words I heard sister-in-law utter.

"Yes, ma'am," replied the child.

"What is the baby's name, Fanny?" queried Jane.

"I don't know," said Fanny; "but Uncle Tom does—he brought it, you know."

"Uncle Tom brought the baby?"

"Yes, auntie, the night it stormed so," answered the unconscious little mischief-maker.

Sister-in-law sprang to her feet.

"Oh, Tom, you villain!" she cried, "have I found you out at last? And you, too, Emma—to think that you would countenance such proceedings in your house! I've suspected something for a long time, and now—Oh, Tom, Tom, Tom!"

"Just listen one moment, and I'll explain," pleaded Tom.

"Don't speak to me," answered Jane; "not one word will I listen to."

"But you must," I cried. "Tom was going to tell you all about it in a few days. He—"

"There is no need of explanation," said Jane; "the fact speaks for itself. If Tom brought that baby here—"

"He did," I answered, "but—"

"There are no 'buts' about it," interrupted Jane, hurrying on her things. "I am going home to ma and pa."

Such a scene followed, every one explaining at the top of their voices, and sister-in-law disregarding everything that was said, and repeating that she knew it all along, and that she was going home to her parents. In fact, she did at length, despite all our endeavours, gain the street door and descend the steps, followed by Tom, whose agitation knew no bounds.

The twilight was melting into darkness; but it was still light enough to discern every feature, and, as the pair descended the steps, another couple ran full tilt against them. Instead of the usual half apology, the female, who was stout and florid, turned round, looked full in Tom's face and collared him.

"I know you," she cried. "It's him, James. I know him. Make him tell you what he has done with our baby."

Tom staggered back.

"Thank Heaven!" he cried, "it is the baby's mother! So you didn't mean to leave it, after all?"

"Mean to leave my baby!" answered the woman; "what do you mean? Tell me what you've done with the child, or I'll choke you. After I'd caught little Billy, I came back to where I'd left you, and you wasn't there, you kidnapper. Where is the baby, before I call the police?"

"Your baby is safe, ma'am," said sister-in-law, who began to comprehend affairs. "And I must say you have the least gratitude of any one I ever heard of. We supposed, of course, that your child had been abandoned, and it has been well cared for by the gentleman whom you should thank instead of abuse."

By this time I had brought the baby to the door, and, after much explanation, the injured mother began to admit the possibility that the whole affair had not been a preconcerted plan to rob her of her child, condescended to receive our apologies, and departed. Only too glad to be relieved from this dilemma we re-entered the house, and there explanations and apologies were made, forgiveness was accorded, kisses of reconciliation were exchanged, and, in the greatest unanimity, we all sat down to tea.

Every story should have its moral, and the one that I deduced from this is: Never keep a secret from your wife, for two reasons—one that it is wrong; the other, that it is impossible.

M. K.

HOWEVER perfect the machinery of a clock, the timepiece is of no use unless it be kept moving. Of what use are wisdom and strength if not imparted to thy fellows?—*Ivan Paria.*

DISAPPOINTMENTS.

—O—

Blossoms hang o'er the fairest flowers,
Sunny mornings end in showers,
Golden clouds at eve of day
Change full soon to sombre grey;
Paths that glow with rosy light
Lead to deepest, darkest night;
Hope is always marred by fear,
Disappointments wait us here.

Through the portals of each home
Soon or late a change will come:
Dear ones laboured for in pain
Turn aside to lesser gain,
Deaf to sighs and blind to tears,
Careless of the love of years;
Or, perchance, the loved of all
Stand where darkest shadows fall.

Goals which seemed to hold within
Treasures that we hoped to win,
Reached at last, are cold and bare
Of the comforts promised there—
Empty of their promised bliss,
Vapid as a dreamer's kiss,
All the light within them gone,
Shining somewhere farther on.

Oh, for wings to waft us higher,
Oh, for hearts that can aspire,
Hope that will not be deterred,
Buoyant as a summer bird,
Eyes to view the "promised land"
Where the waiting mansions stand,
Faith to see what God above
Gives the children of his love!

C. B. H.

ROY'S INHERITANCE.

—O—

CHAPTER XVI.

NORA MACDONALD, suspecting no evil, very nearly fell into the trap that was laid for her. She had known that the stranger came from the Castle her suspicions would have been on the alert, and she would have been on the defensive from the first; but, taking it for granted that he came from her dear friend, Lady Clavering, she also took it for granted that, whatever he proposed, was done with her sanction.

To refuse to walk just outside the wall seemed too ridiculous if the road were empty; for what difference could it make to Lord Mountfalcon whether she were this side, or the other?

But no; it would be breaking the letter of the agreement, if not the spirit; and she knew that it would be wrong as well as dangerous.

"You can tell me all about them here," she said, resolutely. "I must never go outside!" "Not for five minutes?" insinuatingly. "I've left a dog-cart in the road, and I feel nervous about what the horse will do."

"Then you must tell me quickly all you have to say."

"But I don't want to be quick. I've come I don't know how many miles, and you want to send me off in five minutes!" raising his eyebrows.

"Indeed I don't. I wish you could stay for ever!—I don't mean that," interrupting herself, with a vivid blush as she saw the look of satisfaction on his good-looking face; "but it's such a pleasure to see anybody at all. I should like you to stay as long as you can."

"Oh, why did you spoil it?" in an aggrieved tone; "that sounds so tame after the other."

"Shall we sit down on that fallen trunk?" He brushed the ivy with his pocket-handkerchief before he would allow her to sit down; and, as soon as she had taken her seat, he placed himself beside her.

He quietly took his opportunity of studying her features, and decided that he had rarely, if ever, seen such a pretty face before.

Really, there was something too utterly delicious in this adventure, and he did not mind how many visits he had to pay to Bluebeard's Tower.

"Myrtle Lodge, I presume, is the centre of your thoughts?" he said, with a mischievous smile; "so I will begin there. Miss Prinsep—charming girl, a little too stiff for me—takes every opportunity of freezing, but she thaws to that fellow with the long coat."

"Mr. Vernon?" eagerly. "I remember him at the Chase. He wouldn't dance, but he was always talking to May."

"The same. I wasn't there, but I heard of it. Now, Miss Jenny, or Jane, looks on at this little game, and indulges in another of her own with a man with red hair. Jack doesn't like him."

"Oh! did you see Jack?" forgetting Jane in her excitement.

"I had that exquisite pleasure. He sent his love, of course, and something else too," facing round upon her; "but I told him I couldn't deliver it," with a grave shake of the head.

"Jack wouldn't have thought of such a thing," blushing like a peony. "But how was he? Did he look well? Did he seem unhappy?"

"Uproarious spirits, and splendid health. How disappointed you look!"

"I'm not; only I thought he would miss me."

"Miss you? Of course he does. Hillingdon's a howling wilderness without you! There's been such a run on pocket-handkerchiefs that the whole stock's used up."

"No; do tell me the truth!" pleadingly.

"I'll tell you anything you like if you'll only ask me to come again," looking straight into her eyes.

"I mustn't ask you!" with a sigh.

"Then I must come without! Will you be very kind to me when next I come?"

"But I don't think you ought to come," doubtfully.

"I won't worry about that. I wonder what that horse is doing?" he added, on purpose to draw her on.

"Oh! don't go yet; I've a thousand questions to ask you."

"I'll answer them all if you will give me a primrose," looking at a cluster growing at the root of a fine old tree.

"As many as you like!" and she jumped up. She was down on her knees the next moment, picking the blossoms slowly one by one.

He came and stood by her, fulfilling his promise, whilst the time flew fast to both questioner and questioned.

She had an inexhaustible thirst for news; and there were so many people to be inquired after; whilst he seemed a perfect mine of intelligence.

Whether his answers were all founded on fact Nora had no means of ascertaining.

The distant clanging of a bell brought her to her feet with an exclamation of dismay.

"I must go. I shall be late for dinner! Good-bye! and thank you ever so much!"

He held her hand as he looked down into the pretty, eager face with a smile.

"Good-bye, fairy princess! I can't put 'Gold Bangle' again in the agony column, so look out for 'Fred.'"

"Oh! you haven't told me your name, and I haven't said half that I wanted to."

"Keep the other half for next time—and think of me as 'Fred.'"

"Yes; but Fred what?" she persisted, in spite of her hurry.

"Fred—your humble servant," with a low bow.

She had only time to shake her hand at him and fly, little dreaming that her new friend was the unconscious instrument of her bitterest enemy's malice, whilst he soliloquised as he went to the postern, which he opened with a key, taken from his own pocket:

"I'm gone on her—completely gone! She'd take the cake from any woman that was ever created!"

And then he untied the horse, which had eaten a hole in the opposite hedge, for which Lord Mountfalcon would have been certain to claim damages if he could only have seen it, and, getting into the dog-cart, drove off at a frantic pace in the direction of the Castle.

Fred Sinclair was the spirit boy of his regiment of Hussars—the same as Roy Falconer's.

He knew no law but his own capricious will, and was as much bent on mischief as any irresponsible animal.

Everybody liked him, and nobody found it possible to be violently angry with him.

If Nora Macdonald had not been lovely there would have been no danger for her; but now that his inflammable heart had caught fire, the Duchess was likely to find him but too willing an instrument in her hands.

He went back to the Castle quite impervious to all remorse at being abominably late for dinner; and all the evening he kept humming to himself "Queen of my heart," imagining that he was addressing it to the owner of a certain pair of violet eyes.

Nora fled home like a belated rabbit, and, with one look at Marston, who opened the door to her and looked crosser than ever, she darted through the hall with the intention of seeing if Lord Mountfalcon were just going into dinner, or whether she had time to dress for the evening.

The Viscount's door was closed, but as she reached the music-room it opened, and, to her surprise, Philip Falconer came towards her.

He gave a searching glance at her, noting her hurry, the pretty flash on her cheeks, the sparkle of past excitement in her eyes; and he asked himself what mischief she could have been up to, as he shook hands.

"Where have you been?" was all he said aloud, but the roses on her face deepened.

"In the park. I'm a prisoner, you know. I mayn't go anywhere else."

"You ought not to be out so late. The wind is enough to chill you to the bone!"

"I'm not a bit cold. But I must go and see if Lord Mountfalcon is ready for dinner."

"You can't go in there," shortly. "The governor's ill."

"Ill!" in dismay. "But he was quite well when I left him after tea!"

"You've taken a precious long ramble if you've been out ever since then," frowning, as he still felt suspicious.

"If your father's ill," she said, avoiding the subject of her walk, "I ought to go to him. He may want me."

"Then he shan't have you. You are too good to be wasted on a man who couldn't tell whether you were Beauty or the Beast!"

"Is he insensible?" in shocked surprise.

"Insensible to your attractions, which I am not," drawing her to the fire, and looking down into her sweet face, now all aglow with youth and happiness, with sudden admiration in his eyes. "See what a fire I've made for you! I told you, you were to have all you wanted."

"But Lord Mountfalcon didn't," with a spice of malice.

"When my father's ill I am master here," with a toss of his head.

"Then, perhaps, you would like your father to be ill every day of the week?"

His face darkened as he leant against the old-fashioned mantel-piece, and looked down into the blazing coals.

"And if I did, would it be any wonder? Does he make himself happy or anyone else either? Isn't it enough to drive a fellow mad to see the whole place going to rack and ruin, because an old miser gloats over every farthing he can save?"

"He's not a miser!" indignantly. "He tells me that he has no money at all, and don't you think we are all glad to pinch and scrow when he says it is to save him from the workhouse?"

Philip gave a short laugh.

"For my soul that beats everything I ever heard! Why, you little goose, I told you distinctly that he had thirty thousand a year!"

"Then he must have had terrible losses." "He never risks a penny, so how could he lose it? I tell you that I, his only surviving son, have to 'pinch and scrow,' as you call it, and depend upon luck for the very coats I wear on my back (they were always from one of the most expensive tailors), whilst he is piling up his gold, mountains high, and starting us all out of house and home to satisfy a craze? Is it a wonder if I grumble now and then?"

"And this is really true?" looking up into his face with grave eyes.

"Do you think I would tell you a falsehood? Now go and dress yourself in your best!" his manner suddenly changing. "There is someone to appreciate you to-night; and, by Jove, none of your efforts will be wasted."

"I shall put on just the same as usual," coldly, with a touch of dignity that was infinitely amusing to the man of the world.

When he was left to his own reflections, the smile with which he had spoken vanished quickly, and his level brows drew together in a frown.

"The old man ill, out of the way, I might venture to stay here for one night. Only five hundred pounds—a beggarly sum—would set me on my feet again, and to think of thousands wasting upstairs without one farthing of interest! It would be doing a good work to make use of a trifle. I could double or treble it easily, and put back the original sum without anyone being one bit the wiser. I'll tell that our old Grimper to prepare my room. Wonder why she hates me—always looks as if she thought I were the old gentleman."

He went upstairs to wash his hands, but could not dress, as the things which he had left long ago in his wardrobe had never been aired.

"If it were a case of Marion, instead of this little Macdonald, I'd have risked rheumatic gout or inflammation of the lungs, but she's scarcely worth it," he soliloquised as he looked into the glass, and pulled out a grey hair from his left temple.

"Isn't Lord Mountfalcon going to dine with us?" Nora asked in dismay, as she appeared in her pretty blue dress; and Philip scanned her from head to foot as he stood on the hearthrug in the music-room with his back to the fire.

"No, there will be no one to interfere with us. You must tell me all that you've been doing with yourself whilst my respected governor has been making his boards? What does he do it for? They can't go with him when he goes—they'd be certain to melt!"

"Mr. Falconer!" utterly scandalised.

"Open that door and look at him if you want to be convinced that he isn't a saint!" he said, contemptuously.

"I don't know why a saint couldn't be ill as well as anyone else."

"They did feel ill, not a doubt of it, when they were torn to pieces by wild beasts, or hung head downwards on a cross; but I'd take my oath that none of them was ever ill after my father's peculiar fashion," with a short laugh.

Nora said nothing, but wondered much over this very serious illness. Andrews announced dinner. Philip gave her his arm, and they walked solemnly into the cold dining-room.

Philip gave an angry look at the fireless grate. "Confound it! Why haven't they lighted the fire?"

"Lord Mountfalcon says it is wasteful to have a fire in a room which we only use for meals," Nora said, quietly, but she shivered exorcisingly as she spoke.

"Good heavens! Could folly go any further! I hope they don't freeze you upstairs?"

"I thaw enough to come down in the morning."

"Andrews, tell Grimper from me that Miss Macdonald is to have a fire in her room always, except in summer," he said, authoritatively, and Nora gave him a grateful glance.

"Very good, sir!" from Andrews.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Now listen to me," said Philip, later in the evening, placing himself by Nora's side on the sofa, which he had drawn close up to the fire. "You are very young, a mere child compared to myself, and you've a difficult part to play. I wonder if you realise that by coming here you've isolated yourself from the rest of the world?"

"Certainly I do," with a heavy sigh, as she held up a feather torn between her face and the fire. "I've shut myself up between four walls."

"It's not that I mean," leaning forward, with his elbow on his knee, his head resting on his hand. "I want you to feel and know that by coming here you've offended every soul you ever knew, from your good aunt to my nephew Roy."

He saw the pretty lips quiver, the lace on her bodice heave with a quick drawn sigh, and he knew that his words had gone home. Before she could answer, he went on,—

"Mrs. Prinsep thinks you are the most mercenary little creature she ever heard of; Roy agrees with his friend the Duchess in dubbing you a sneak."

"Don't, I can't bear it!" and burying her face in her hands she burst into tears.

He looked down at the bent head, crowned with sunny curls, and smiled.

"I thought you were cured of your mad passion for Roy," he said, very quietly.

In an instant the small head was lifted proudly, and the violet eyes flashed fire through their tears.

"How dare you say such a thing to me!" she exclaimed, passionately. "I never cared for him a bit! Only," with a sob, "I was so sorry for him!"

"I'm glad to hear it," composedly; "but you may keep your pity for someone else. Roy is at the present moment making up to Lady Alice Hawthorn, a pretty girl, who has just had a tiny fortune bequeathed her by an eccentric cousin."

"Is this true?" she asked as quietly as she could.

"As true as that I sit here. I believe he had a fancy for you in the first instance," he remarked, diplomatically, in spite of the look of pain in the girl's quickly-averted face, "but you sank down to the depths as soon as you came here. He misjudged you, like all the rest. I am the only soul who has ever done justice to your intentions!"

She looked the very picture of woe, but she kept back her tears bravely.

"You know that I never meant to keep a penny for myself!" she said, anxiously.

"More fool you!" he ejaculated, mentally, but he smiled kindly as he said aloud,—

"Yes, Nora. I know your generous heart better than anyone else."

"Why do you call me that?" looking up with the air of an offended queen.

"Why shouldn't I? You let Roy call you that the first evening you ever saw him! Shall I tell you something more?" bending forward so that she could not avoid his grey eyes. "This stranger whom you had only known for a few hours, you let him defile your sweet lips with his kiss!"

"Don't! It wasn't my fault," she gasped, her soft, white neck crimson, as well as her cheeks, as she writhed with shame and confusion.

"Poor little thing!" he said, with affected pity. "I swear I won't mention it to a soul, if you'll only be nice to me. A good thing the Duchess doesn't know it. It would amuse her immensely."

"You won't tell her?" in wildest alarm.

"There are two parties in this house," he

went on, as if she had not spoken. "Andrews and Mrs. Wiltshire are on my side; Grimper and Venables are against me. To which do you belong?"

He saw the unwillingness in her face, yet he knew that she could not stand up against his veiled threat. She bit her lips, she twisted her handkerchief into all sorts of shapes.

"I asked you a question," he said, slowly, "and much depends on your answer. How can you possibly hesitate?"

"Can't I be on Lord Mountfalcon's?" struggling like a bird in the toils.

"No," he said, sternly. "Are you for me or against me?"

Ah! now she remembered all the warnings that she had received on either side against this man, and was she going to yield to the most ungentlemanly threat that was ever made in civilised society?

She suddenly sprang to her feet, and faced him proudly.

"I'm neither the one nor the other, and you are a coward to try to frighten me into it!" she said, resolutely, her chest heaving, her whole frame shaking with excitement.

He stood up, and his pale face flashed as he set his teeth.

"By George, you shall pay me for this! You are very bold, young lady, but be good enough to remember that you are one little girl of indifferent reputation against the whole world."

"If your reputation were half as good as mine it would be a good thing for you, Mr. Falconer!" she flashed back at him at once.

"I suppose you have been listening to some idle gossip against me," he said, with a sneer. "Let me remind you that gossip passes over a man's head like the breath of the wind; but it is ruin for a woman."

"It's nothing to me!" proudly. "I live here as quietly as if I were in a nunnery. What can they say of me?"

"They can say many things!" his eyes shined. "They can say that you live at Mountfalcon with no woman of any standing in the house, and that I am its only visitor."

"Well, what of that?" defiantly, as the colour rushed into her face.

"Nothing!" very quietly; "only it proves the truth of what I said. I am your only friend."

"Then I'm worse off than any girl ever was before," clasping her hands together.

He looked at her angrily, wondering at the girl's courage in standing against him, and racking his brains to find some way of subduing her to his will.

It would be so useful to him to have an ally in the house, and yet he had offended her past forgiveness in his effort to conquer her aversion.

"Will you let me apologise for what I said just now?" assuming an air of deference. "I had not the slightest intention of betraying your little flirtation to anyone in the world. It was a poor joke; but you made it worse by taking it for earnest."

Again that vivid blush, which made her face like a sunset.

"It was cruel of you to talk of it," she said, in a low voice; "but you always are cruel to me. You wouldn't defend me to my aunt. You let her think me mercenary and heartless. You would not defend me to the Duchess. You let her suppose that it was I who made the Duke fall when you knew it couldn't be!"

"My dear child, you don't understand the smallest amount of diplomacy," in a patronising manner. "I could not defend you from the charge of wishing to be an heiress without making Mrs. Prinsep think that you were desperately in love with Roy; and if I had taken up the cudgels for you with the Duchess, she being a woman who sees an intrigue in the simplest matter, would have cried out on the house-tops that I was in love with you myself. That would have been nothing to me," shrugging his shoulders; "but it might have been objectionable for you. Now, having cried

and-culpa! let us shake hands, and part friends."

He held out his hand, and she put hers into it.

"I have answered all your questions. Won't you be glad to see me if I bring you another budget of news?"

He knew that letters from Hillington were as welcome to her as water in a desert to a sun-baked camel, and yet she could scarcely allow that anything that he could do would be the smallest pleasure to her.

Over dinner they had discussed the smallest trifles, such as Mrs. Falconer's new bonnet or the Rev. Mr. Galt's sermon, and she had listened to all he told her with intense interest, whilst he never guessed that she had heard all the chief items before.

"Yes, I'm so lonely, and out of the way. I shall be glad to see you," she admitted, reluctantly, trying once to qualify the admission as much as she could.

"And now, if you'll take my advice, you'll go to bed. You look tired and washed out; and, remember, if you give up the fruits of your labours you will want all your best looks for a future to make up."

"I hope I shall depend on them," with a faint smile, as she took her candle from his hand.

"You might depend on something infinitely worse," he said, encouragingly, as he opened the door for her. "Sleep! that is the great restorer for the young as well as the old. Good night!"

"Good night!" looking over her shoulder in the solitude of the Beacon's Cell, the light of the candle falling on her silken hair and bringing out its golden tints—her large eyes gazed and ailed.

As she looked at him, her thoughts wandering from Philip Falconer to Roy. It seemed as if her beauty came upon him like a flash of revelation, and he stood still to watch her slight figure crossing the hall as if he had suddenly become aware of its grace.

Slowly she went up the stairs, as if some crushing weight had quelled the vivacity of her youthful spirits; slowly, but so gracefully, one beautifully rounded arm supporting her skirts in front, and looking white as ivory against her pale-blue draperies.

Philip closed the door and flung himself into an arm-chair, with his hands clasped behind his head, his pulses beating quicker than usual.

What if he gave up all thoughts and mad ambitions of winning back his first love? What if he gave up the weary counting of a sick man's days—the almost hopeless waiting for a day that might never come—and devoted himself heart and soul to this child with the haunting eyes?

She was lovely enough to please the most fastidious taste. She was young enough to be moulded to his will. She was likely one day to have Mountfalcon pinned to her skirts.

Yes, he had been a fool not to play his part better.

He might have gradually won her confidence—warned her from thoughts of his nephew by reports of his flirtation with Lady Alice Hawkshaw; got her slowly to look upon himself as her one and only friend, and so crept at last, unawares, into her empty heart.

Surely with every soul that ever cared for her shut out, he would be an utter imbecile if he did not get a chance.

What was an innocent, unsophisticated girl to do against a thorough man of the world?

Whilst Philip's busy brain was plotting a hundred schemes for his own advantage, Nora had gone upstairs with a new suspicion in her mind.

Why was he so anxious for her to go to bed? He solicited about her health was put on to veil his hidden reason.

He had said so much about the hoard of gold upstairs that it had fired her imagination, and she could think of nothing else.

It was in one of the rooms on that very floor, according to what he said; and for the

future she would have no peace, lest burglars should come to the house after the hidden treasure.

The more she thought of it the more she became convinced that Mr. Falconer had some plan in his head, and wished to get her out of the way, in order to carry it out.

She could not bear to think of anything going wrong when the old man was defenceless in bed, and Venables was fully occupied with the charge of his master.

And yet what was Mr. Falconer likely to do?

A Falconer would not not the part of a thief.

But, then, supposing he had an idea that some of that money ought rightfully to be his, he might think himself justified in helping himself to a portion.

He had spoken bitterly of his own state of penury.

Father he had bills which a father would naturally be bound to pay.

Anyhow, the temptation was great, and, from what she had heard of him, she guessed that his principles were weak; and she sensed instinctively to feel that something would happen that night.

She took off her dress, and put on a pale blue wrapper, letting down her hair in a glittering cloud over her shoulders.

Then she took up a book, and, pulling an arm-chair close to the fire, prepared to enjoy herself whilst conscientiously playing the part of an amateur watchman.

The house was as still as death, and the old-fashioned novel was dull, without any of the sensationalism of the present day to excite her imagination.

The natural consequence was that her lids began to grow heavier and heavier till the long lashes rested on the velvet of her cheeks. Her pretty lips parted, her chest heaved in long-drawn breaths, and she fell fast asleep.

She was unconscious of everything.

When the first sound broke the stillness—the first uncertain sound that seemed to tell of danger—the only ears that cared to watch for the old man's sake were deaf with sleep.

CHAPTER XVII.

SUDDENLY Nora Macdonald started up, rubbing her sleepy eyes, and looking round in bewilderment at the candle burnt low in the socket, at the fire gone to grey ashes in the grate.

She had evidently fallen fast asleep; but if so, what had roused her, and made her heart beat so fast and furiously?

What was that? Listening breathlessly. Shuffle—shuffle come those weird footsteps along the passage, and a desperate resolution darted into her mind to solve the mystery once and for ever.

First blowing out the candle, she stole across the room on tiptoe, and opened the door as softly as possible.

A cry nearly escaped her as she saw the gaunt figure of Lord Mountfalcon only a few yards from her.

He was dressed in a shabby Indian dressing-gown, which had once been of gorgeous hues.

His walk was unsteady as he came slowly forward, his slippers trodden down at heel, catching in the holes of the matting, leaning with one hand on a gold-headed stick, whilst in the other he carried a tallow candle in an old-fashioned silver candlestick.

His long, thin face was deadly pale, but there was an animated look in his cavernous eyes which Nora had never noticed before.

He seemed to be on the watch for something, or somebody; his eyes roaming from side to side of the narrow passage, his head bent a little over his left shoulder, as if he were listening intently for a sound he could not hear.

A horribly, uncanny feeling stole over the girl as she watched the old man staggering on, his bent figure swaying like a child's in its first walk, the candle guttering in the draught, an

oath dropping every now and then from his toothless mouth in a hoarse whisper.

What was he doing in that corridor after midnight, when she had never known him leave his own suite of rooms during the day?

Where was Venables, who never left his master night or day?

She could not go across that ghostly hall to fetch him for the world; but if he were only here, what a tremendous relief it would be!

She stood there shaking and shivering, afraid to go away lest the old man's strength should fail him, and he should fall without anyone to help him.

Already his breath came in gasps as he went slowly along the dark, cold passage; and once her heart stood still with fear, for she really thought he was on the point of tumbling down, but he was only fumbling for a key in his pocket.

After some difficulty he found it, fitted it into the lock of a door on the other side of the passage, opened the door, and, going through it, tried to shut it after him; but a man, who seemed to have dropped down from the ceiling, or risen up from the floor, kept it open with his foot, then slipped through the narrow opening like an eel, and closed it behind him.

He appeared and disappeared so suddenly that Nora had no time to see who it was. She could only tell that the door was shut, because there was no ray of light in the darkness.

Who was that other man?—Venables, Philip Falconer, or a burglar?

In dreadful doubt she waited, holding her breath. For all she knew to the contrary murder might be done at that very moment in the stillness of the night, and how could a helpless girl prevent it? The moments crawled by, her teeth chattered, her feet became like ice.

Oh, if she could only tell what she ought to do! When longer suspense had become unbearable, and she felt that she must either do something desperate or else go quietly to bed, there was a sudden cry, and a pistol-shot rang out, loud and shrill through the silence. Her heart gave a bound, and then stood quite still, whilst she clutched the door-post in her fright; and then gathering together all her natural courage—without one thought of the peril for herself—she sped down the passage, determined to save the old man, at whatever cost to herself.

"Murder! murder! murder!" she cried, breathlessly, in the desperate hope that the sound of her treble voice might reach Venables in his far distant room.

"Murder! murder! murder!" came in a ghostly echo from the long vaulted passages of the weird old house, but not a single voice answered to the appeal.

The darkness was as dense as if that corridor had been cut out of the bowels of the earth. Nora could see nothing, but she heard the door burst open, and smelt the fumes of gunpowder in the air. An awful terror came over her. A cold sweat broke out on her forehead. She dared not take a step forward for fear of what might be lying on the floor.

"Who's there?" a voice asked out of the darkness, which to her great relief she recognised as Philip Falconer's.

"Nora Macdonald! Oh, tell me what has happened?" trembling as she heard a groan from the ground close to her feet.

"It's nothing!" he answered, unsteadily, "Nothing at all. Only get me a light, for Heaven's sake; the candle fell!"

"But Lord Mountfalcon—is he hurt?" she asked in her great anxiety.

"No, no—a light—a light!"

She felt sure that the Viscount was hurt—dreadfully hurt, probably—but she could not stay to ask another question. As she hurried back to her room she was prey to the worst forebodings. At first she could not find the lucifers, for matches have an exasperating habit of always hiding themselves when most wanted, and the wick of the candle was obstinate and would not light.



[THE EVE OF A TRAGEDY.]

As soon as she appeared in the corridor Mr. Falconer hurriedly took the candle from her hand, and carrying it into the room, bent down over his father's prostrate figure, looking intently at the deathly face, whilst his own was nearly as white. Nora, thinking that the poor old man was dead, wrung her hands with a gasp of horror.

"Don't be frightened," said Philip, hoarsely. "he has only fainted. Pull my handkerchief out of my waistcoat, make it into a ball and give it to me. Now, like a brave girl, press it to his shoulder, just where you see that mark on his dressing-gown, and hold it like grim death."

Nora did as she was bid, but she was shaking like a leaf in the wind, and could scarcely keep herself from breaking down.

Philip watched her without a word. She had not bothered him with a heap of questions, or gone into hysterics, as most other women would have done.

Steadfastly and bravely she did what she was told, keeping all her fear to herself.

"It's a confoundedly awkward business," he said, after a long pause, "but we must have Venables; we can't do without him. I think I might manage that handkerchief; but don't be long."

"You want me to go and fetch him?" looking up with startled eyes.

"Yes. I see no help for it; but hark, somebody's coming!"

Venables and Grimper stood in the doorway. The housemaid threw up her hands with a dramatic gesture. The valet asked in a low voice, "What is the meaning of this?"

"A frightful accident has happened," said Philip, as he raised his head. "My father took me for a burglar. When I tried to get the pistol out of his hand it went off, and shot him in the shoulder."

"Strange," said Venables, as he took Nora's place, and stooped to examine his master's wound. "I never knew his lordship carry a pistol about the house."

"No," said Grimper, fixing her stony eyes on Falconer. "I should say the pistol belonged to him that used it, and it's a mercy if his lordship ain't been murdered in his own house by one who should be the last to do it."

"None of your insolence!" said Philip, roughly. "Make yourself useful and fetch some brandy."

"I have it here," and Venables put his flask to his master's lips. "But I shall want a basin of water and some bandages."

"Get them at once," to Grimper. "Do you think it's serious?" lowering his voice as he spoke to the valet.

"If the shot had struck six inches lower it would have been very serious indeed," he answered drily.

"I never was so frightened in my life. I thought he had killed himself!"

"I should never suspect his lordship of committing suicide," said Venables, gravely. "He meant to live as long as he could."

"He nearly did it involuntarily then to-night. It was a near shave."

Nora looked pitifully down on the withered face, with the sunken cheeks and the beggared brows. All the beauty and grandeur of life had passed from the Viscount, and left a complete wreck behind.

His broad chest had fallen in, his long legs looked like two bits of bone, clad half-way to the knee in shabby black silk socks. His fleshless hands might have belonged to a skeleton.

What could have brought him from his bed in the middle of the night? Did he want to see if the hoard of gold were safe? Just as she was thinking of it she saw a key lying at her feet, and concluded that it was the key of the iron chest in the corner.

Falconer caught sight of it at the same time, and darted forward to reach it, in his eagerness nearly trampling on his father.

But Venables was too quick for him, and slipped it into his pocket. Philip turned

upon him, his face like a thunder-cloud. "I'll trouble you to give me that key."

"Excuse me, sir, but it belongs to his lordship, and as long as I am here I am responsible for its safety," firmly, but respectfully.

Philip controlled himself with an effort, and uttered an angry oath under his moustaches.

"Can't I do anything to help?" Nora asked, softly.

"No; run away to bed. You look like a ghost."

"And you think he will get better?" looking from one to the other.

"Yes, yes. Venables is a capital surgeon. He walked the hospitals once. There's your candle!"

"But when you've put him to bed I could sit up with him. I shouldn't mind what I did to make him better," very earnestly.

"You'd be worn out before morning. Get into bed as fast as you can," his eyes following her to the door, where she stayed for one moment to give a last glance at the poor old man whose sudden death might mean Roy's ruin.

She shook her golden head sorrowfully, and turned away. In the passage she met the housemaid hurrying along with a basin of water, a colossal sponge, and several long strips of linen, and stood aside for her to pass.

"Now are you satisfied?" asked the woman, with a fierce light in her eyes, stopping for a moment to launch her question in spite of her great hurry. "Didn't I say that murder stalked through the house at night, and wasn't I right—wasn't I right? Go to your home, you know too much. It may be your turn next."

Then she went on, and disappeared through the open door, leaving Nora Macdonald to lie awake for hours, all trust and peace destroyed by her horrid suggestions. Could a son try to kill his own father? Could a Falconer of Mountfalcon brave the disgraceful fate of a parricide?

(To be continued.)



[LOVE AND ANGUISH.]

NOVELLETTE.]

POOR LITTLE VAL.

—X—

CHAPTER I.

"I AM very sorry for you, Ethel. I know you had hoped such great things for Eric; but our children seem born only to plague us, and this projected alliance is unseizable in every way," and Mrs. Grant pressed her friend's hand sympathetically.

"Unseizable! yes, but what can I do? Eric is of age, sole master of the house and estate, and the kindest and best of sons, though given to Quixotic deeds. I think I could bear the idea of this engagement better if only he loved her. I have his letter here. Listen what he writes:—

"I hope you will treat poor little Val kindly, for my sake. It is true I cannot in any sense be called her lover, but I am genuinely fond of, and sorry for, her. Save myself, she has not a friend in the world; and, above all, mother, remember her mother's story is to be a profound secret. She has never heard a hint of the truth."

"Well," said Mrs. Grant, as the other folded the letter, "I think she should know all, and how in every respect she is differently situated to other girls."

"I shall obey my son's wish," Mrs. Eastlake answered coldly. "Where is the use in raking up an old scandal? And even you, Philippa, will acknowledge the girl's mother was as much sinned against as sinning—poor weak soul."

"Her offence is beyond pardon. I wonder to hear you condone it!" Mrs. Eastlake smiled a trifle scornfully; then said,—

"I do not pretend I feel any liking for Valentine Dalton, but I shall treat her courteously; only I wish, with all my heart, that my son had never gone on this

disastrous tour. It was at Dijon he met the Daltons, and even then Mr. Dalton was rapidly sinking. He wrote to his wife's friends to take charge of the girl, but one and all refused utterly, and he himself stood alone in the world. Eric says the sight of his agony and anxiety so touched him, the girl's friendlessness so appealed to him, that he proposed to marry her as soon as matters could be arranged."

"And his proposal was accepted, of course!" said Mrs. Grant, smiling maliciously as she adjusted her furs. "You expect the young people to-night? And does your sister come on here with them?"

"Oh, no! they part company at Yeovil. Good-bye dear, my kindest love to Guinevere. If only Eric could have seen her before this fatal engagement occurred!"

"It is useless to cry over spilt milk, and if he has chosen to spoil his life that is his concern only. Good-bye, I will bring Guinevere over to-morrow."

Left alone, Mrs. Eastlake sat thoughtful and grave, the firelight playing about her queenly figure, softening the proud lines of the handsome face. Her heart was heavy with disappointment, but she gave no sign of this; and when two girls, tall and beautiful as herself, entered, she looked up with a faint smile.

"Not dressed, mamma!" said the elder. "Do you know how late it is? They will be here soon."

"I am going to my room now, Maude, and, girls, I must reiterate my warning of last night. Do not displease Eric by any show of antagonism to Miss Dalton."

"Mamma," said Maude flushing, "I trust we are ladies; at the same time, it is unpleasant to live in daily and hourly contact with such a woman's child, 'like mother, like daughter.'"

"Be just," urged Mrs. Eastlake, as she rustled away, leaving the sisters to discuss the unwelcome visitor. The shadows deepened in the beautiful old room; the slow minutes wore

by, and when the lights were brought in they found they had yet an hour to wait before Eric and his fiancée arrived. Mrs. Eastlake came down richly dressed in black velvet and pearls, looking queenly and stern, and the time passed in desultory gossip until the distant sound of wheels was heard. The mother rose, just a little agitated, and waited with an elbow on the mantel, until with a clatter the carriage came up the drive; then slowly descending the stairs reached the hall, just as her son entered with a girl upon his arm—so slight, so small, as to seem a child. She was dressed in deep mourning, and from beneath her black hat the small face gleamed white and piteous, the great brown eyes had a wistful timid look, which touched Mrs. Eastlake to compassion.

"This is my mother, Val," the young man said, leading her forward, and Mrs. Eastlake touched the girl's brow with her lips. Such a shrinking, piteous child, so like what her mother had been before her, only with a touch more firmness about the sensitive mouth.

"You have had a long journey," Mrs. Eastlake said, courteously, "and will be glad to change your dress. My maid shall show you your room."

As she spoke a showily-dressed dame stepped forward, and after a quick, half-contemptuous glance at the little shrinking figure, led the way upstairs. In a short while she had unpacked Val's modest trunk, and mastered the extent of her wardrobe. Then she set to work to braid the beautiful brown hair—which was one of its owner's few charms. And all the while her fingers deftly wove the heavy plaits, she furtively watched the small white face reflected in the mirror.

"She isn't pretty a bit," she thought. "What could Mr. Eric see in her? And, upon my word, she's crying!" as the slow tears filled the dark eyes. "What a baby!"

The simple toilet was quickly made, and Val turned her tear-stained face towards the maid.

"Thank you for your help," she said, uncertainly. "I am quite ready to go down now, please," and the Abigail flattered downstairs before her.

As she entered the room Eric went forward and whispered a few encouraging words to her, then introduced her to Maude and Gertrude, who murmured polite commonplace and touched the little hand with their fingertips. Then they all went down to dinner. Val sat by and constrained that she answered all remarks in monosyllables, and scarcely ever lifted her eyes from her plate. It was touching to see the tenderness with which Eric treated her—a tenderness wholly devoid of love, but so full of disinterested pity that poor little Val never dreamed what a sacrifice he had made in linking his life with hers. The sudden lighting up of the small face, the quick, responsive smile when he addressed her, told, too, how already he was her hero, her king—the one idol in all the world for her.

After dinner the girls played and sang, and Eric prevailed on Val to give them a quaint old English ballad.

"I am quite proud of Val's singing, mother," he said, looking kindly down at the diminutive figure; "it is the one thing she excels in."

The girl's voice was not powerful, but of a peculiarly sweet and clear quality, and when the song ended, Mrs. Eastlake, in momentary forgetfulness said,—

"Your voice is like your mother's."

Instantly all Val's shyness vanished, and the little eager face flashed as she asked,—

"Did you know mamma? will you talk to me of her sometimes?"

"We were never friends," coldly, "and after she married Mr. Dalton I never saw her."

Something in her tone made Val wince, but Eric came bravely to the rescue.

"Come here, Val," he said, "I want to show you some Shakespearean illustrations," and drawing her apart added,—

"Now, tell me all you remember of your mother; remember I must always be your confidante. Do you recollect her well?"

"Oh, yes!" with a faraway look in the lovely eyes. "You see I was ten when she died, poor mamma; papa was never glad any more. She was little, like me, and her face was the saddest and sweetest I ever saw. She had suffered a great trouble before papa married her, although I cannot tell you what it was. We used to be so happy together in that old house at Darmstadt, although we never visited or received. You know, Eric (she spoke his name with pretty shyness), we were always poor, and mamma never cared for society."

That night, when Mrs. Eastlake and her son were alone, the former said,

"Eric, you are foolish to encourage that child to speak of her mother; it might lead to much awkwardness. Depend upon it, before long, some one will tell her the truth."

"It will be unfortunate for the one who does so should I learn it!" in a flash of scorn. Poor little soul, it would kill her; she is such a child yet. You will be kind to her, mother?"

"I will treat her with all due consideration, but I will not feign an affection I do not feel. Oh, my boy! my boy! you have acted rashly, and will be sorry in the future. If only you loved her the sacrifice would be less; but such a plain, unformed, little thing."

"I am very fond of her," he said, loyally, "and can mould her into what likeness I choose. She is a dear, affectionate, little soul, and will make me as happy as a man can expect to be."

The mother shook her head. "I know you better than you do yourself, and I foresee nothing but misery for both. I can only pray Heaven that history may not repeat itself. Valentine is very like that unhappy woman. When is the wedding to be?"

"Oh! not yet. She is only eighteen—in a year's time, perhaps. Mother, I am deeply grieved to have disappointed you, but, in my

place, any man would have acted as I did. She was homeless, friendless, almost penniless."

"You are a noble boy," with tears of love and pride in her eyes, "but you have acted terribly. Good-night, good-night, and may I prove a false prophet?"

As the days wore by, Val's shyness and constraint only increased, and an added shade of melancholy stole over the white, small face. Already she felt herself an interloper, although, indeed, Mrs. Eastlake and her daughters treated her with invariable courtesy and consideration. But Val's was a nature which yearned for love, and she understood young Eric's son, and without it she despaired sadly. She began to feel that, in choosing her, Eric had displeased his friends, and spoiled his prospects. That thought was torture to her. One day he came upon her in tears.

"Why, little woman, what has gone wrong?" he asked, in a tone of tenderness, such as she uses to a little child. "I can't have you spoil those pretty eyes with crying."

She leaned her head against his arm.

"Eric, I want you to tell me truly, were your people very, very angry when they heard we were engaged?"

"You only guess so. What has put such a notion into your head?"

"I am very foolish," with an air of conviction, "but I think I know when—when people care for me, and sometimes I am afraid that—that—"

"Well, go on, sweetheart."

"That your mother and sisters dislike me—that they think you should have chosen more wisely; and sometimes I am afraid that now you know how stupid I am, you, too, will be sorry. If it is so—if it is so, Eric—let me go away."

She was trembling violently, and so vast a pity filled the young man's heart, he half believed he loved her. Drawing her close, he said gently,—

"My dear, you should not encourage such morbid thoughts. You do not understand my mother and the girls. They are very reserved—could not be demonstrative if they tried. And as for me, child, do I look dissatisfied with my bargain? Come, kiss me and be good."

But she held back a little.

"I am not fit to be your wife—I feel it, I know it."

"Does this mean, Valentine, that you do not love me?" he asked gravely.

"No, oh no! How can you dream that? I only want to do what is best for you. I love you with all my heart—oh, yes! with all my heart and strength."

"Then that settles the question," gaily, "and we will have no more doubts and fears. Run and dress. I am going to drive you to Wellwood; when there, Val, you must get some ribbons or fall-lais to brighten your dress, as I want you to look your best to-night. Mr. and Miss Grant will dine with us."

"Are they nice?" timidly.

"I don't know. Mrs. Grant has only lived in this neighbourhood a year, so we are acquaintances only, although she and my mother are good friends. Miss Guinevere I do not know. A slight illness has prevented her calling upon you."

"What a beautiful name! Is she lovely?" with a touch of wistfulness in her voice.

"I understand so, Little Curiosity, and, pray, how long am I to be kept waiting?"

"I am going now," and with a smile she vanished, leaving her lover very thoughtful.

The drive to Wellwood was pleasant, and the horse air brought a faint tinge of colour to the usually pale face. The beautiful luminous eyes were full of happy love as they were lifted to Eric's. "Poor little girl," he thought, "may she never know my love is less than hers."

She bought some ribbons and white lace, and Eric insisted upon purchasing some strings of pearls for her hair, "saying it was a shame such beautiful hair should go unadorned," and full of content they reached

home. Val ran to her room, to prepare what was, to her simple ideas, an elaborate toilet, and Eric, having dressed, stammered into the drawing-room, all ignorant that to-night he was to meet his fate—happily oblivious of the misery which would grow up for Valentine from the events of to-night.

CHAPTER II.

MAUDE was talking to a tall girl in white, and neither saw Eric's entrance. He stood unobserved, silent, held breathless by the new, strange beauty before him.

She was possibly twenty, and a certain air of pride sat well upon the fair face, and the queenly figure. Masses of soft, yellow hair were drawn back in waves from the broad, low brow, and coiled in heavy plaits at the nape of the neck. Black brows and lashes darkened the already dark hazel eyes; and, as the red lips curved into a smile, Eric thought a man possessing so much loveliness was to be envied.

Not a touch of colour stained the purity of her dress, which was almost severe in its simplicity, and admirably calculated to enhance her many charms.

Maude was first to see the intruder, and she motioned him to come forward, saying to her companion,—

"Guinevere, you must know my brother!" Then these two were face to face—these two whose lives henceforth would be inextricably mixed and mingled.

The girl knew all the story of his unselfishness, his sacrifices, and was prepared to like him; his beauty took his breath away.

He hardly knew of what they talked; he only heard the subtle music of her low voice, the ripple of her light laughter.

He drew a deep breath of relief when Val entered, and his pity for her was so keen as to be pain. She looked smaller, more childish, than ever beside these stately girls, her wistful eyes and sad young face were in marked contrast to those around.

He went to meet her. She was wearing his pearls in her hair; there were white roses at her breast. Eric would remember her thus in all the years to come. She looked up into his face with a winning, welcoming smile, then whispered,—

"Oh! Eric, what a lovely girl! I would give ten years of my life to be like her."

Her generous praise pleased him.

"You are best as you are, my shy little mouse," he said, kindly. "Now, gather your courage together. I am going to introduce you to 'the beautiful young lady'; she is Miss Guinevere Grant."

At the sound of her name the brilliant blonde turned quickly, and seeing Val so near, said, informally,—

"I am flattered that Mr. Eastlake has brought you to me so soon. I hope we shall be excellent friends!" and something in her manner won Val's confidence at once.

"I should like it very much," she said, naively. "I have never had a girl-friend."

Then there was a stampede to the dining-room, and Val was separated by half a length of the table from Miss Grant, who was talking merrily to a young curate. But when the ladies rose Guinevere, possessing herself of Val's hand, said,—

"Take me into the house. I hate sitting with a dozen of my sex, unadvised by a single male's society. There is always sure to be scandal," and Val was nothing loth.

Miss Grant had often visited the conservatories before, so her inspection was of the most cursory kind; and presently she sat down, drawing Val close beside her, little by little winning her to speak of herself, listening with her brilliant eyes grown soft and pitiful, until when the shy voice ceased she stooped, and gently kissed the pale cheek.

The colour flushed then over Val's face and throat; she was so grateful for, so trusted to, kindness now, save from Eric.

"I shall love you all my life," she cried, impulsively, whilst the other laughed somewhat uncertainly. "How beautiful you are! How kind to me! I wish, oh! with all my heart, I wish I had a share of your loveliness, for his sake." The last words were spoken below her breath, but Guinevere heard them, and was touched by them.

"He loves you for yourself," she said. "Be content, Val. (I may call you Val?) You sweet little innocent, do you forget the old saying, 'Beauty is only skin-deep'?"

"It always seems to me the beautiful must be good, and should be happy," answered Val, gravely; "and you have the face of an angel, whilst I—"

"You are one of those little women who quietly walk into people's hearts."

They went back to the drawing-room fast friends, but Guinevere saw from her mother's expression that she had deeply vexed her, though it must be confessed that thought did not trouble her serenity.

"Guinevere," said Mrs. Grant, as she rustled up to her, "I was never so annoyed with you. How can you make yourself so ridiculously conspicuous with that girl?"

"I am sorry to appear ridiculous," the daughter said, coldly, "as I, for one, shall treat her with something more than courtesy."

She looked so resolute, so proud, standing there in her ripe, young beauty, that Mrs. Grant thought it wise to conciliate her.

"It is of your welfare I think always, Guinevere; and I may be pardoned if I wish that all your associates should be stainless in name."

The beautiful face never changed or softened. The girl knew too well that her mother would countenance any vice in an eligible *parti*, would use her best endeavour to force her into any alliance which promised wealth and rank.

She turned away wearily, scornfully.

"That poor child is happier than I," she thought. "I envy her innocence of the world and its ways." Then someone joined her, begging for a song, and she moved to the piano, followed by a small court of admirers.

Val was happy, being allowed to play the accompaniment; and as she listened to the exquisite voice pealing upwards and onwards, tears rose to her dark eyes—tears of pleasure and of pride in this new friend, who already was second only to Eric in her regard.

"Is she not beautiful?" she questioned him when all the guests were gone. "There is no one like her! Not even your sisters have her loveliness and grace. And, oh, Eric! she is so kind, so good to me! I found myself wondering over her goodness whilst she talked!"

He smoothed her dark hair gently. "The wonder is how any creature could be harsh to you, you little, timid thing! Now run off to your room, or you will lose your beauty-sleep."

She clung to him a moment.

"Eric, why do you always treat me as a child? I feel quite old sometimes; and it hurts me to think I am only a toy for you! I want to help you in everything, as I did papa. Here I am always idle."

"Your mission is to love me and minister to my happiness," he said, playfully. She hid her face against her breast.

"I do love you!" she said, with such passionate abandon that he was startled. "It would kill me to lose you!"

In after days he would remember those words sadly; pitifully; even now they startled and grieved him. He had never wished she should give him more than affection. But he lifted the small, tender face, and kissed the quivering lips; then led her to the door, where they parted—she to dream happily of him, he to go back thoughtfully, troubled a little by Val's words, haunted by the beautiful face of Guinevere Grant, dwelling almost unconsciously on what might have been.

After this Guinevere was a constant visitor, and a close observer would have seen that Mrs.

Grant continually contrived to throw her into Eric's society; much as the girl resented this.

She was always most kind to poor little Val, treating her with an affectionate tenderness that was quite touching; shielding her as best she could from her mother's ill-veiled scorn and dislike, preferring her to Maude and Gertrude, who were not too well pleased by her openly expressed affection for Val.

Eric was grateful to her, although he wondered over her open coldness to himself, and strove to break down the barrier between them.

He did not guess Miss Grant was just a little afraid that she should learn to love him. Already he was a hero to her, self-sacrificing and generous; and the charm of his manner appealed peculiarly to her.

Sometimes she was prevailed upon to share Val's ride with him; and her bright chatter enlivened the way as Val's never could do.

She was a fearless rider, and looked superb in the saddle, whilst Val was timid in the extreme, and no amount of practice would ever make her a good horsewoman.

What wonder if Eric, "being a man, having eyes," should note the difference between his fiancée and her friend; the one plain, dark, quiet; the other crowned with such beauty as the angels wear, resolute and fearless.

Poor Val! poor little Val!

She was too unsuspicious, too trustful to believe that, having given her his heart, he could take it back again. She did not dream, the poor child, that she had never had his love, that affection and tenderness were far apart from the grand passion. Oh! it was pitiful!

Mrs. Eastlake, looking on, saw that daily Eric became graver, more taciturn; saw, too, his growing love for Guinevere, and hoped that matters "would right themselves."

"Of course," she said to Maude, "of course I would provide for Valentine should a rupture occur, although her mother's people should be responsible for her maintenance. It is unnatural that Eric should so sacrifice his life's happiness to a Quixotic idea, although I shall say no word to him that may hint my wish. Guinevere is a girl to be proud of!"

"She is most beautiful!" Maude said, generously; "and Val is such a little, unformed, plain creature, that Eric may well be pardoned if he finds his promise too hard to fulfil."

And Val went on her way, heedless of what lay before her, happy in the fixed belief that she was first and dearest in Eric's heart, the heart which daily drifted farther from hers, which was full of one bright image, one vain longing growing into a bitter despair.

But whatever Eric suffered he was brave enough to hide. He had won Val's love unwittingly; he had freely offered her all his life, all his fortune; and now if he realised his mistake let his be the suffering.

Still he was neither stoical nor immaculate; and one night when he stood talking to Guinevere, the longing to tell her all he felt, all she was to him, so possessed him that he could no longer keep silence.

"Miss Grant," he said, "I am a poor companion I fear, but I am bothering myself with the problem of life, and wondering if it is worth living. It is so full of mistakes, of vain longings, of fruitless hopes; but suppose a man has made a false step which threatens to spoil his whole life, what must he do?"

"If the error cannot be retrieved, he must bear the consequences bravely and patiently," Guinevere answered, soothing her face with her fan, "otherwise he is a coward."

"Perhaps you don't understand; let me make the matter plainer. Suppose the man of whom we speak, in a rash moment—carried out of himself by another's anguish—pledges himself to marry a girl for whom he has no love?"

"He must keep his word, or brand himself as dishonourable."

"But which is the most dishonourable of the two—to claim one's freedom, or to marry one woman whilst loving another?"

"Why do you ask me these things?" Guinevere said, in a low, distressed voice. "Mr. Eastlake, there is only one way open to you. You must abide by your promise."

She broke down all subtleties, and spoke with brave candour. Eric stood silent a moment, then bowing, answered gravely,—

"Thank you, I will abide by your decision; but it is hard," then he looked at her.

She was white as the flowers she wore, and her wonderful eyes were dimmed by tears. He would have given a year of his life for the privilege to kiss them away. But he only said, in a commonplace tone,—

"Grant me one favour; give me a flower you have worn," and without a word she obeyed.

In a moment she had recovered her usual manner, and placing her hand on his arm, said: "Take me back to mamma, if you please."

Eric thought "She does not care," whilst all her heart was crying "Oh, my love, my love! Lost to me; it is cruel I should be my own executioner."

Little he dreamed of this as he brooded over what might have been, and now could never be, and only the anxious tenderness of Val's eyes recalled him to a sense of his duty to her. He joined her at once.

"You look ill," she said in that soft, coaxing way which was her chief charm. "I am afraid you take too little care of yourself."

"I was always a careless fellow; but it will soon be your duty to look after me and lecture me, Val. I only hope your care won't take the form of cruel and hot fannels."

She laughed, blushing brightly at the same time.

"I don't think you would prove a very tractable patient," she said, with an upward glance, "and I am sure I dared not lecture you, you big, formidable boy. I would only be very, very anxious to please you."

His heart smote him with pity for her. The poor child, she gave so much in return for his little; but he would be very good to her always. She should never know how wasted was his whole life for her sake, never guess how bitterly he rued that promise made to her dying father in the far-away foreign town.

Miserably he went to his room that night. "Fool! fool!" he thought, "so to thrust happiness aside, and then all that was best and noblest in his nature rose up in protest against him. His face softened, his eyes shone through a strange mist, as a rush of tenderness came over him."

"Poor little creature, dear little Val," he thought, "she has only me, and, please Heaven, I will never hurt or deceive her. I must and will forget Guinevere; to remember her is folly."

So for days he avoided her, and Val wondered why he was so chary of his praises of her friend, so loth to meet or converse with her.

If she had been wise she would have guessed the truth; but she was as simple as she was confiding, and not yet was she to taste the cup of knowledge, which, once tasted, would poison all her days and nights; until, in after weariness and despair, she would lie down never to rise again, never to vex those about her any more.

CHAPTER III.

WINTER passed, and spring came with its wealth of flowers, its bright days and uncertain winds. The time of Eric's freedom was wearing fast away, and he shrank back mentally at the prospect before him. But there was no change in his manner towards Val, unless indeed, it was more markedly tender and protecting. Both he and Guinevere made much of the little creature, who was too happy in their affection to care how the world went on.

It is true Eric was graver than before, but he had many matters to occupy his thoughts

and energies, so this was no source of anxiety to Val. He was about to contest the borough, and she was proud in her belief of his ultimate success, and spoke so naively, so certainly, of the great things he would do in the House, that even Mrs. Eastlake relaxed into smiles. Her manner had softened greatly towards the young orphan; and although she was never affectionate, she treated Val with a wonderful amount of consideration.

One day in early April the Eastlakes dined with Mrs. Grant. There were many people present, and Val's usual shyness was intensified by the presence of so many strangers. Mrs. Grant introduced her to a tall, elderly lady, whose start and stare of astonishment served to bewilder the girl more. She hardly knew what she said or did, and only became alert when her new acquaintance said,—

"Do you mean this young lady is Laura Byford's daughter?" and Val thought Mrs. Grant smiled peculiarly as she answered in the affirmative. But her shyness was gone now; she was hungering to speak of that dear dead mother, whose sweet, sad face and shadowed eyes she could so well recall, and she asked eagerly,—

"Did you know mamma?"

"Yes, once; before she cut herself off from society by her own act!" returned the other, coldly, and moved away with Mrs. Grant, leaving the poor child frightened and bewildered.

She stole away to the conservatory; there she could be quiet, there she could think. What was her mother's fault? Why would none of her new associates speak of her? Why did they shun her child? She was slowly waking to the knowledge of good and evil, and all her soul was torn with doubt, and a vague, undefined feeling of shame.

She remembered now that, when her mother lay dead, her father had stood looking down at the small white face with something more than sorrow on his own. In the light of those days Val called it remorse, and forgetting her presence, he had sunk on his knees, groaning,—

"It is all over now, my sweet, it is better so, better so! But wife, wife, if you could but say 'I forgive you,'" and Val had wondered even then what need this loving husband and father had of forgiveness.

Silent and distressed she sat amongst the palms and ferns well screened from view, and hearing voices and steps shrank back further into the shadows. To her dismay the newcomers seated themselves at a little distance from her, and peering out she recognised Mrs. Grant and her obnoxious friend Mrs. Walsingham. Even then Val would have escaped, but her constitutional shyness held her back, and she remained in her seat, hoping the ladies would go away, trying to close her ears to their conversation. For a time she almost succeeded; but when Eric's name, coupled with her own, reached her, all effort or pretence to do so was over.

"So that splendid young Eastlake is going to marry Miss Dalton," said Mrs. Walsingham.

"Yes, it is a great pity, and his mother feels it keenly; but she is so foolishly fond of him that she will not oppose any wish or plan of his. But she is dreadfully disappointed."

"One can feel no surprise at such a sentiment. Does the girl know her own history?"

"No; and Mrs. Eastlake, acting on her son's expressed order, refuses to enlighten her ignorance, although I have pressed her many times to do so. The girl is well enough, but her antecedents won't bear inspection."

"She is a plain little thing, apparently unfitted in every way to fill her future position; and it will be very awkward for Eric Eastlake to introduce his wife to Lord Berrydown or one of his cliques. People do not easily forget such stories as Laura Byford's."

"And I say that a man should consider his family when he proposes so grave a step as marriage," returned Mrs. Grant. "This is very sad for Mrs. and the Misses Eastlake,

but it will be worse should he have children!" She rose as she spoke and shook out her skirts. "It will be pleasant to tell them that the maternal grandmother was a divorcee!"

They moved away unheeding that low, wild cry of shuddering anguish. No one heard, no one saw that small white figure fall heavily and helplessly forward, the white arms outstretched, the small hands fiercely clenched.

But Val had not fainted; she was cruelly conscious. A thousand voices sang that awful word in her heart and brain, and the shame of her mother's shame seemed to consume her like fire. She must go away; she could not burden Eric with undeserved pain and disgrace! Oh, Heaven's blessings on him for his loyal love.

Many things, trifles in themselves, but all significant, now returned to her; the solitude in which her parents had always lived, their strange shrinking from society, her mother's sadness and her father's half-deprecatory manner towards his wife, all went to confirm the dreadful fact of her mother's sin. With a low wail she covered her eyes, and lay there supine in her anguish, heedless of her pretty finery, the white gown Eric had praised so recently. She knew nothing but her own disgrace, felt nothing but her loss of all she loved and prized.

"It will kill me," she whispered in her heart. "It will kill me! Oh, I wish I were dead now! I cannot face my darling, knowing all I know."

How long she lay there she could not tell. For her, "time was not, and all the world stood still," by reason of her anguish, and she started with a little scream when Guinevere's voice said,—

"Val—why, little Val! what have you been doing? I have hunted everywhere for you. Val!" growing alarmed, "what is it? Are you ill, dear?" and kneeling beside her, Guinevere lifted the rcombeant figure in her strong, young arms.

Such a white, wan face, such wild, agonised eyes met hers, that her fear increased; but she stooped and kissed the pale lips tenderly.

"Let me call help. Oh, my dear! I am afraid you are very ill."

"Yes, but not as you think," Val said, in a choked voice. Go away, Miss Grant, please."

"Miss Grant! Val, what have I done that you should grow so suddenly formal?"

"You have done nothing, best and dearest; but you must not be my friend any longer. I am a shame and a burden to all, but most to him—oh, Heaven! most to him."

"You are talking very wildly, little Val. Try to compose yourself, and tell me all. My dear—oh, my dear!" as the girl made a gesture of despair, "you frighten me; I will fetch Eric."

"No, no, no!" grasping Guinevere's skirts feverishly. "You must not do that. If you love me, you will help me to go away and leave him. Oh, I never should have come here, never! I know now why Mrs. Eastlake does not love me; and I do not wonder any longer. I am so unworthy, so unworthy! Yet how shall I go away? I was so happy!" and the pitiful voice died wailingly out.

"My dear," Guinevere said, with infinite gentleness, "you must try to exercise some self-control. Presently, we may be joined by others, and you would not wish to be seen thus. Tell me all that has occurred (she already partly guessed the truth), and let me see in what way I can help you. As for going away, that is out of the question. You must consider Eric before your own wishes."

"I do; indeed, I do! and it is for his good I shall go. Do you think it can be well for him to marry me—the child of—of a divorcee?"

Then, finding Guinevere did not shrink, she went on,—

"I loved her so! I loved her so! you would not think she could be wicked if you had seen and known her. But they said so—your mother and that dreadful woman. I was

aiting here, feeling miserable and lonely, when they came in. They talked of Eric and me. They pitied him for his ill-advised choice, and said what pain and grief it was to Mrs. Eastlake; and then they spoke of my mother by her maiden name, and called her by that dreadful word. Guinevere, is it true? If you know anything tell me now. If my mother sinned there must have been some terrible excuse for it!"

"There was, my poor little Val. She was sorely sinned against. Let me bring you to a seat, and try to listen quietly whilst I tell you her history; and try to remember whatever wrong she wrought, she is still your mother; and I am sure that she loved you dearly."

She drew Val down beside her, and put an arm about her, with her right hand holding both Val's warm and close.

Then she told the story, not as her mother would have done, but gently, pitifully, a divine compassion in her beautiful eyes.

"Twenty years ago, Val, your mother was a young thing, so like yourself in ways and looks that her old friends and acquaintances are startled when they see you for the first time, almost believing the dead had come to life. She was the only daughter of the Honourable Cecil Byford, a younger son of the dreadfully impetuous Earl Fosdale, and from her earliest years had been taught that she must marry well for her people's sake. She was neither clever nor beautiful, but she was loving, only there was no creature on whom to lavish her affection until, in her eighteenth year, she met your father, Mr. Francis Dalton. Like herself, he was poor, but, having some expectations, had been taught no profession or trade.

"Your grandfather was furious when he asked for his daughter, and drove him from the house with contumely. Poor Laura was sedulously guarded, allowed to go nowhere unless accompanied by her mother, and the young people found no chance for speech. She was weak and yielding, terribly afraid of her parents; and when Lord Berrydown appeared as a suitor; they compelled the poor child to accept him. He was a profligate, and many years her senior; but they weighed his gold against his vices, and gave him their innocent child, although they knew her lover's past would not bear inspection—that it was black with treachery to, and betrayal of, more than one poor soul!

"Well, they were married, and Mr. Dalton went abroad. From the first, Lady Berrydown tried to do her duty to her ruinously husband, but she was afraid of him—she loathed him, and he resented this. It was not long before he taunted her with her love for your father; and, wearying soon of his loveless wife (she had been only one of his many caprices), he treated her brutally. She grew more and more depressed and scared, and when she ventured to appeal to her father, he harshly upbraided her, bidding her remember her wifely duties. So matters went on for more than a year. Then Mr. Dalton returned, and, hearing of his old love's unhappiness, endeavoured to see her, but she steadfastly refused to grant him audience.

"At length a climax came: a cousin of Mr. Dalton's was dining with the Berrydowns, when, almost without provocation, my lord, who was in a drunken state, struck his wife, calling her at the same time a most opprobrious name. An uproar ensued, during which the unhappy lady alternately begged no one to avenge her, and prayed for protection. The guests presently left, believing all would be well, but Lord Berrydown forced his way into his wife's boudoir, and there brutally assaulted her. In her fear and pain she fled, and knowing it was useless to apply to her parents, went to Mr. Dalton. She was mad, I think. However that may be, the end of it was that my lord got his divorce, and Mr. Dalton married your mother, taking her abroad as soon as the ceremony was solemnised. My dear! she sinned much, but she was much to be pitied."

The pale, small face drooped on Guinevere's bosom.

"Poor mother! poor little mother!" Val said. "And I was so near condemning her. Oh! dear friend, thank you a thousand times for your goodness, your love and compassion. No other would have been so just or pitiful; but nothing can make it wise or well for me to stay here. I must go away, oh! I must go away!"

"Is Eric's happiness nothing to you?" Guinevere questioned, bravely and generously putting aside the promptings of her own heart, doing deadly hurt to her own passionate love. "Val, he knew the truth when he chose you from among all women to be his wife. He was willing, nay, glad to lift you to his own level, to give you his own honourable name. It would be a poor return, indeed, for all his love to run from him now, to make his life a burden because of his anxiety concerning you. No, no, Val; you must be brave for his sake, and soon you will live down your history."

"People do not easily forget such scandals," so Mrs. Walsingham said; and, Guinevere, I have been thinking that perhaps it was not love at all that Eric felt for me, only he was sorry for my loneliness, too good and too generous to let me drift where I would."

"You are talking foolishly," Guinevere said, severely; "men do not marry out of compassion. Your worst fault is your absurd self-depreciation. Now, Val, remain here (I trust to your honour) whilst I seek Mr. Eastlake. He himself shall assure you of his love," and without further speech the brave girl went back to the gaily-lit rooms, to widen the gulf which yawned between the man she loved and herself.

It was not hard to distinguish Eric amongst the crowd of idlers. His dark head towered above all others, and, blushing a little at her own courage, Guinevere made her way to him.

"Mr. Eastlake, will you please go to Val," she said, when she had drawn him aside. "She is ill and unhappy. Through a much-to-be-deplored accident she has at length learned her mother's story, and is suffering untold agonies of shame and grief."

"You have been with her?" he said, gratefully, "comforting her as none other could. Guinevere, you are an angel!"

"A very tarnished, imperfect one," she answered, sadly, as she turned away. "Val is in the conservatory."

Always reminding him of his little fiancée, always holding him to his allegiance, even though it almost broke her heart to drive him from her. Always faithful to these two she loved, surely Guinevere's reward would come at last?

Ah, yes! but with such great pain to one that the reward itself would carry a sting with it.

CHAPTER IV.

It was a hard matter to convince Val that her mother's sin should not recoil on her, or that it could in any way unfit her to be Eric's wife, and the temptation was strong on the young man to accept the freedom she offered. But he thought of her loneliness, her great love, which surely he had done his best to win by his patience and tenderness. Then he thought of Guinevere, whose heart he knew was his own. She had not hesitated to place Val's happiness first, then he would be less than man to fear to tread the path she had taken.

So with much entreaty and persuasion he prevailed on the hapless child to allow matters to remain unaltered, binding her by his generosity the closer to himself.

But there was a great change in Val. Always humble, her humility now became painful in its intensity. She seemed daily and hourly apologising for her mere existence, and the wistful look in her large, dark eyes

smote Eric to the heart. She followed him like some faithful dumb animal, anxious to wait on his pleasure, to do him service. And now, at last, Mrs. Eastlake's pride broke down. The child had long been growing dear to her; and now, when she went trembling into that lady's presence, begging her to overlook her unworthiness, and be kind to her for Eric's sake, she fairly broke down; and taking the tiny creature in her arms, kissed her gently upon the mouth.

"My dear," she said, "I will not tell you, you are the wife I should have chosen for my son, but I am quite sure you will do your best to make him happy. I tried to steel my heart against you, little Val, but you have conquered, and from to-day we are mother and daughter!"

When Eric heard of this interview he thought Val would now recover her usual tone, but he was mistaken; the iron had entered her soul too deeply, the shame of her mother's shame weighed heavily upon her.

Always sensitive, she now shrank in fear and trembling from meeting strangers, and craved nothing so much as seclusion from the world.

Mrs. Eastlake began to be anxious about her, she grew so thin and languid; but when she proposed leaving home Val always shook her head, and, smiling faintly, begged they would not carry her away. By her wish the arrangements for the wedding were suspended. A voice whispered to her that she would never enter Eric's house as Eric's bride. She was painfully anxious, too, to learn what she could of her mother's people; and to please her, Eric imparted what news fell to his share. The Honourable Cecil Byford, now an old man, had been widowed years ago, and had married a second time, his spouse being the relict of a Jewish money-lender; and despite her money and the Honourable Cecil's rank, it was impossible to float her in society.

Val sighed as she listened, and Eric said quickly,—

"You do not think of making yourself known to them, I hope?"

"They are her people," she answered, simply and sadly.

"Yes, but her father sold her to certain misery, and when you were orphaned refused to receive you," Eric retorted, with some show of temper. "If ever you know him personally it will be without my consent, and against my expressed wish. He is an old scoundrel."

Val said no more. She was far too meek and loving to oppose him, but she often wondered over the hard old man, and hoped in her tender heart that he was repentant for the wrong he had wrought his child.

Weaker and paler she grew as the spring ripened into summer, until, when autumn came, she was very frail indeed. Mrs. Eastlake was genuinely concerned about her health, and insisted upon calling in a medical man.

"It was only want of tone, general depression," he said; but Guinevere Grant knew better. She, made wise by love and suffering, saw that Val was sinking under the burden of another's shame, and that nothing short of a miracle could save her. Mrs. Grant watched the girl with keen, cruel eyes. If she were dying, why should she not die now, when the impression of her own child's beauty was so vivid upon Eric.

"If no one else will speak, it remains for me to open Valentine Dalton's eyes," she thought. "What right has she to usurp my daughter's place?"

So she watched and waited her opportunity, which came all too soon. It was Gertrude's birthday, and there were to be great doings. Mrs. Eastlake had superintended Val's dress, introducing daring dashes of scarlet amongst the white draperies; and when the beautiful hair was carefully braided, and Val's precious pearls adorned the little head, she declared herself delighted with the result.

"You look very pretty my dear!" she said, "and Eric will be proud of you."

Val lifted her hand and kissed it gently, then turned away with a heavy heart.

"How could Eric be proud of her—Eric, the handsome and generous?"

Some *tableaux vivants* had been arranged, and Guinevere called her to admire her Amy Robsart costume.

"It is very beautiful," Val said, "and Eric will be a handsome Leicester, only the character does not suit him. He is 'the stainless knight,' and you should not have chosen such an unlucky heroine."

Guinevere laughed as she pinched her cheek. "I hope we shall acquit ourselves well. Did you know that Cissie Cottell has agreed to play Judy to Eric's Panch? They will be comical."

"Yes, I heard Maude say their representation would be as good as a farce; but I must go now, dear, to watch for your advent. What a shame! your picture is so far down the list."

She joined some acquaintances in the room set apart for *tableaux vivants*, and sat quietly watching and enjoying everything that passed, when Mrs. Grant rustled up to her, and whispering "Eric wants you in the Norman Room," sank into the place Val had just vacated.

The Norman Room was the pride of Mrs. Eastlake's heart, being hung by quaint old tapestries worked by the industrious fingers of remote Norman ancestresses, who might have been better employed. It was lit with antique lamps, and the floor was covered with some rushlike substitute for carpet. It was sacred to the family, and a few particular friends, and hither Val went swiftly and lightly, glad to think her lover remembered her in the midst of so much distraction. Her little feet made no noise along the corridors her soft garments no rustle, and, unheard, she reached the door, which stood wide open. Gently pushing aside the heavy hangings Val looked in, then fell in a shuddering heap upon the floor. She had seen and heard enough. The curtains slipped from her nerveless hold, and though she strove again and again to tear herself away, she could not move. She closed her eyes; but Guinevere's lovely face, distorted with anguish and love, was before her still, and still she saw the appeal in Eric's eyes, the hopeless, endless passion which so transformed him. And as she crouched shuddering there he spoke, in such a strange, dull voice that above her own pain rose divine compassion for him.

"Thine, then, is good-bye, Guinevere! It is right, it is best, but it is harder than I thought. Oh, my love! oh my love! say some kind thing to me before I go?"

The listener lifted her white, drawn face, and waited for the reply. It came, broken with sobs and tears.

"What shall I say to you—oh! my heart! what shall I say? Only this, that I love you! love you! love you! and shall do until I die! Only this, go back to that poor soul we both hold dear, and never let her know the truth. It would kill her to learn that pity and affection alone reigned where she trusted love was lord."

Pity and affection! Oh, Heaven! it was hard, too hard! She should go mad with her misery. "You will kiss me before you go, Guinevere, as we kiss our dead."

The wretched child heard the rustle of silken garments as Guinevere moved towards Eric. "My beloved, my beloved! good-bye!" Oh, how far away their voices sounded. Was she dying, or was this but a swoon? "Be good to her, our poor little Val, and in time you will be happy—you must be; and I shall be a better woman for having known and loved you."

Their voices were farther off now; she heard them as one in a dream. Still, with a blind instinct to hide herself, Val contrived to crawl further into the recess, then sank silent and senseless on the floor. A little later, a figure, in white and gold came out, passing with blind wet eyes close to the prostrate girl; still later, a man emerged from behind the curtains, and

in his headlong speed stumbled over her. With a startled exclamation he bent over her.

"Great heavens! she has heard all! Oh, my poor little Val!" and lifting her in his arms carried her to her room, where presently his mother and a maid waited upon her.

The guests heard that Miss Dalton had been suddenly taken ill, and were politely sympathetic; but Mrs. Grant smiled triumphantly, knowing how well her plot had worked.

Guinevere went away unconscious of the mischief done, and when the last carriage had rolled away Eric went up and listened outside Val's door. No sound reached him, and presently he ventured to knock softly; his mother came out to him.

"Go down, Eric, she is sleeping now; but I must warn you my boy, she is very, very weak and ill. I am afraid she has received some great shock."

"She has. Come with me; I must unburden to you. Mother, if that poor child dies, I am the wretchedest man living, because I shall be her murderer."

Perplexed and trembled Mrs. Eastlake followed him downstairs there to hear the story of his wild love for Guinevere, and Guinevere's noble loyalty for her little hapless friend.

She was intensely grieved, the child had grown so dear; and yet, perhaps, it was but human that she should be pleased to think so unsatisfactory an alliance would never take place now.

"I cannot understand how she came to follow us," Eric said. "It is not like Val to be suspicious, or to play the spy."

"I can easily explain that part of the matter. Mrs. Grant told her you were waiting for her in the Norman Room; she is the only one to blame. And her motive is easily guessed. She is not too scrupulous, and she hoped that a rupture between you and Val would result in an engagement with Guinevere."

He frowned and bit his lip.

"I never liked Mrs. Grant, but I thought her honourable. I wonder how Guinevere has preserved her nobility of character, having such a mother!"

He sighed heavily, and paced to and fro restlessly; then suddenly halting before Mrs. Eastlake, said,—

"Of course, mother, you understand that I am still bound to Valentine; that I will take my freedom only from her. Poor child! poor child! I have wronged her cruelly, and I meant to be so kind."

He passed a wretched night, harassed by the thought of Val's misery, tortured by the memory of Guinevere's love and pain.

"I am a worthless fellow," he muttered savagely. "I always prided myself on my constancy, and now I am as false and fickle as Judas. What shall I, what can I say to Val?"

In the morning she sent for him, and he obeyed the summons abashedly. He found her lying upon a couch, wrapped in a white pique, than which her face was not less white. There were dark circles under the lovely eyes, lines of pain about the tender mouth. But she smiled faintly as he entered, and motioned him to her side. He sank down on his knees before her, thus bringing his face on a level with hers, and taking one slender hand in his prayed humbly, "forgive me, dear!"

"There is nothing to forgive," she answered, in so weak a voice that he was startled. "I might have known you could not love me; I might have guessed it was impossible to see Guinevere and remain indifferent to her. I thank you both for your loyalty to me; you have been hardly tried. And oh, my friend! oh my friend, for all your generous pity and protection I thank you! I bless you with all my aching heart. Who am I that I should be angry?—I who have received nothing but goodness from you and her? Oh! you will be very happy, and in your happiness I shall be glad."

He looked at her in amazement. Such self-denial, such gentleness, seemed almost divine to him.

"Valentine," he said, "if you are willing

to accept me as I am, and, knowing all, I am yet yours."

She shook her small, dark head determinedly.

"No, Eric; last night made me wise. And that you may know I am not ungrateful for all your goodness, for the willingness with which you would have sacrificed your whole life for the sake of one you did not love, for one who never was or could be worthy to be your wife, I give you back your freedom, asking only that when you are happy with her you will not wholly forget one whose only merit was her exceeding love."

She had spoken rapidly, and in a far more manly manner than he had ever heard in her. Now she sat erect—a bright spot burning on either cheek.

"Do not answer me yet, or I shall grow confused, and forget what I wish to say. Do not plead with me against my decision, it is irrevocable. I have packed all your gifts together, Eric. Take them back—no, not all; I have dared to keep the ring. I ask you to leave me that sole memento of my happy days. I could not bear to part with it. I could not bear that another should wear it; and a note of pain ran through the sweet, young voice."

"Keep them all, Val; it is a little thing to ask. Keep them all, my dear, and when you look at them remember that he who gave them you was false, and so learn to forget him."

She resented his self-accusation, and it was hard to prevail on her to keep his gifts; but he succeeded at last, and, seeing she was weary, rose to leave her. She held her hand to him.

"Good-bye!" she said, gently, "to-morrow I shall be gone."

"Gone! What do you mean, Val? Where are you going?"

"To my mother's people. Oh! spare me a little; let me go away until I have learned resignation and content; then if you wish it—if they are not kind—I will come back!"

And seeing the anguish on her face he would not attempt to dissuade her from her plan. She lifted her dark eyes to his.

"Kiss me now, dear! for the last—last time. Oh, love! Oh, my darling love, good-bye! Tell Guinevere to come to me that I may assure her of my joy at her happy fate," and when he left her there were tears on his cheeks, which perhaps were not only Val's.

Later Guinevere, pale and trembling, entered the room, and, weeping wildly, caught Val in her arms. When she dared to look into the small, pale face, it was like the face of an angel.

CHAPTER V.

Valentine had elected to go alone to her grandfather's house, and unannounced; and seeing that their entreaties and persuasions to change her decision only distressed her, Eric and his mother allowed her to go.

The journey was long and dreary, the Honourable Cecil's house lying in the heart of the Lincolnshire fens; but it was over at last, and leaving her trunks at the modest station, Val started for Lebanon House.

The flat, unlovely road stretched out before her in a painfully straight line. The wind was boisterous, and a small rain fell; but she held on her way steadily, meeting no one—hearing no sound but the howling of the wind among the trees. And, finally, when she was almost too weary to go further, she caught sight of the "Grey House in the Hollow," of which a friendly porter had spoken.

It looked very gloomy and uninviting, and an air of privation hung over it. Ramour said the second Mrs. Byford was miserably, and out down the expenses to the lowest scale.

Trembling in every limb poor little Val went up the ill-kept drive, and knocked timidly at the door. After considerable delay it was opened by a man-of-all-work, who looked stolidly down at the small figure and pale face.

"I want to see the Honourable Cecil By-

ford," she said. "Will you please take in my card?"

"He don't see no one but the doctor nor," returned the man, in broadest dialect. "It's as much as my place is worth to let you in."

"But I think he will see me. I am Miss Dalton, his granddaughter," she urged.

The man was a native, and knew her mother's sad story. How he stared at her with undisguised curiosity!

"I might ha' known that if I hadn't been a fool. You're as like Miss Laura as one pea is to another; but I don't think you'll get much of a welcome from master or missus."

"Let me announce myself, please. You will excuse blame so. Where shall I find him?"

"Go along the hall till you come to the third door, that's his study, and there you'll find him!" and pointing the way with a grimy finger, he went below to regale the solitary maid with "Miss Laura's story and the governor's rage," when he heard she had left her husband.

Reaching the third door Val knocked, and a harsh voice bade her "come in." She obeyed, in fear and trembling, and saw a tall old man, with long grey hair and beard, seated in a chair before the fire—the crutches beside him proclaimed him a cripple.

When he saw her standing, dismayed and white in the open doorway, he screamed out, "Go away! go away! why do you come to torture me? I'll swear I acted for your good, Laura!"

Val stood quite still, regarding him with pitiful eyes, his abject fear was so sad to witness.

"You mistake me for my mother. I am Valentine Dalton," she answered, gently; and, when he did not seem to grasp the sense of her words, repeated them distinctly and firmly.

This time he understood, and, ashamed of his recent fear, broke out furiously,—

"Why do you come like a ghost to startle me? You are so infernally like your mother! Why do you come here at all? Did I not repudiate you long ago?"

"Yes," Val answered, with new-born firmness; "but I did not think you would be so odorous, so unrepentant, as to cast me out shelterless and penniless upon the world. If my mother sinned, you were the cause of her sin. You made her an outcast, and so dowered me with shame. Surely it is a small thing to ask of you—food and shelter. But if you refuse it I will go," and she turned away.

"Stay!" said the wretched old man. "They told me you were well provided for—that you would marry young Eastlake. How should I know you were in want?"

"It is true," she said, with simple dignity, "that Mr. Eastlake would have married me, simply to save me from want; but he did not love me, and, learning this, I could not consent to be his wife."

"The more fool you," coarsely. "And why are you so confoundedly like Laura? You are like the ghost of her, and I doubt Mrs. Byford's welcome will not be warm. Rebecca has a spirit, and is very parsimonious. You may wait here if you like until she comes home."

Val sat down near the door, whilst her grandfather alternately grumbled at her and bemoaned his unhappy fate.

She was faint and hungry, but no refreshments were offered, and she was too nervous to express any wish for them.

Presently a shabby obese and miserable-looking pony came up the drive, in which sat a lady, whose hooked nose, thick lips, and small, cunning eyes proclaimed her origin all too plainly.

(To be continued.)

A man who cannot, so to speak, bow to his own conscience every morning is hardly in a condition respectfully to salute the world at any other time.

NOVELLETTE—continued.

A WAIF FROM THE SEA.

—30—

CHAPTER V.—(continued.)

How long Luke had been there alone he did not know; but presently he was aroused by a footstep on the shingle, and the man who was in his thoughts came forward; the scent of his cigar mingling with the soft sea-breezes.

Dudley did not see Luke, and would have passed on unheeding, only with a sudden impulse Polwhill emerged from the rock against which he had been leaning and stood in the other's path.

"Luke, old fellow, how you startled me," Crewdon said. In his happiness at knowing himself beloved, he had quite forgotten the resentment he had felt at what he considered Luke's unwarrantable interference about Ellaline's proposed visit to Crewdon Hall, and was disposed to be as cordial as ever with him.

"I want a word or two with you, Maister Crewdon," said Luke, in a curiously husky voice.

"Certainly," returned the other, somewhat surprised at the request. "If there is anything I can do for you—"

"Ye can tell me this. D'ye mean t'act fair an' square as a gentleman should," Luke broke out, unable to contain the fire slumbering within him.

"I do not understand you," Dudley said, haughtily, all his pride up in arms at being thus addressed by an inferior.

"I seen—ye—to-day—by—the—ruined mill," Polwhill returned, accentuating each word.

"If you did, what then?"

"Why this, Maister Crewdon. Be you agoin' t' make Ellaline," there was a quiver in his voice as he spoke the name, "yer wedded wife?"

"What right have you to question me?"

"What right?" Luke began furiously, then checking himself he went on more calmly. "After what I seen this day I knows she loves ye, an' I s'pose ye loves 'er; but I tella 'e, Maister Crewdon, rather than ye s'ld make her yer light s'lar, I'd lay ye ded at my feet, tho my loife s'ld pay the forfeit!"

It would be hard to describe Dudley's feelings at this address. Anger struggled with admiration of the man's rugged honesty of purpose, and finally this feeling conquered when he remembered that it was in the defence of the woman he loved that Polwhill spoke.

"Luke," he said after a moment's consideration, "I might knock you down for your doubt of my honour; but I know it is your anxiety for Ellaline's welfare that prompts you to speak as you have done; and, besides, as you almost stand in the place of a father to her," here Luke winced, "I owe it to you that you should know one of the first that this day she promised to be my wife."

"Your—wife?"

"My loved and honoured wife. Why, man, you must know little of the honour of a Crewdon if you could think—bah! I cannot talk of it."

"I beg your pardon," said Luke, almost humbly. "Youm allus been a gentleman, but I'd heerd 'o old Squire were very proud, and I thout he wud scarcely loike a woman w'out a name for his an'ly son's wife. I thout must be youm only amain' yerself, but that wud be deeth 'er."

A cold chill seemed to come over Dudley as Luke spoke. What if his haughty father should refuse to receive a nameless bride? But even in that case he would not give up Ellaline. If he had to choose between them he would rather leave Crewdon Hall than renounce and break the heart of his innocent love.

"Luke," he said, earnestly, "come what will, Ellaline shall be my bride. If my father

consents, I know my mother loves me too well to in any way assist in making me unhappy. If he agrees, with what pride I shall take my wife to the old Hall, where so many fair women have reigned in turn as its mistress, though not one of them could compare with my Ellaline. If he does not—"

"What then,"—there was a suppressed eagerness in Luke's voice that he strove in vain to conceal, "if he refuses?"

"I shall marry her without his consent. I have a small fortune of my own, enough to keep my darling, though not in the style she deserves; but I will work for her, so that want shall never come near her. Oh! Polwhill, you do not know what true love is when you think it could be influenced by obstacles such as those you hint at. She loves me. I love her. No power in this wide world could keep us apart."

This answer ought to have satisfied Luke, but, somehow, it did not. Each of Dudley's words seemed to drop like ice upon his heart, quenching for ever the slight hope which had sprung up that young Crewdon would be so far influenced by his father's opposition that he would give up Ellaline, at all events while the Squire lived—but now!

He turned away with a heavy sigh. Not know what love was? The well did he know it, and what misery a hopeless passion could bring to an untutored heart; what mad jealousy and tearing pain it could cause.

Oh! if he could only die and end it all, or, better still—a thought, murderous and black, suddenly assailing him with a terrible temptation—remove his rival from his path. How easy it would be. He knew Dudley intended leaving Pengarth on the morrow to make final arrangements, and ascertain his father's attitude on the subject of his marriage with Ellaline, for, though Crewdon had not said so in so many words, now that Luke knew that he had been accepted from his own lips he understood very well his hurry to have all things settled, and the suspense over.

He, Polwhill, might offer to row him over to the nearest point where he could catch a train, there being no station within seven or eight miles of Pengarth, and it being much shorter to go by water than overland, and then—why then how easy it would be. Dudley would have little chance against Luke's much more powerful frame. Maddened by hopeless love and jealousy, he could choke the life out of him with his sinewy fingers, and—Polwhill had not lived all these years on that wild coast without finding out some of its secrets.

He knew there were several places, fissures in the caverns, deep pools in the silent caves where anything deposited would never again see the light of day, never be found by the most curious. Dudley Crewdon would be missing, no clue to be found to his fate till the last trumpet at the Day of Judgment should sound, and the dead be called from their graves, hallowed and unhallowed.

There was a horrible fascination in the thought. It haunted Luke Polwhill all that night as he paced to and fro, to and fro, like a caged wild animal, under the dark blue, star-spangled vaults of Heaven.

It followed him to the cottage when, some hours after the dawn had broken, he returned there to settle his disordered hair, and bathe his blood-shot eyes in clear cold water.

It would never do to let anyone suspect there was anything amiss with him, because, afterwards, when the hue-and-cry was raised, it might be remembered against him.

It was still with him when Dudley, who had come down early to have a last stroll with his betrothed in the fresh sweetness of the morning air, gratefully accepted his offer to row him across, and thus gave him a long tramp, and he went to busy himself about the boat, not seeming to notice, and yet being keenly conscious of every caress bestowed by his rival upon the girl he himself so madly loved.

It was there floating through his mind in all its ghastly horror when, the last adieu said,

and Dudley having reluctantly torn himself away from Ellaline, who would have accompanied her lover to the station save for the fact that old Ben, who was over ninety, and growing very feeble, was not at all well, and she did not like to leave the old man alone ill during Luke's absence, he shoved off the boat, and saw that radiant figure and beautiful face with the eyes gazing so wistfully, not at him, but at his rival in the stern.

It was with him, crowding out every other thought or feeling, as with powerful strokes he impelled the boat through the turbulent water that always surrounded Deadman's Rock, not caring or noticing whether he was sending her, till a bump, a shock, a startled exclamation from Dudley, and they were both thrown into the water that seethed and hissed round that fatal spot, struggling for their lives amid the hungry waves, that threatened every moment to engulf them, and cast their battered bodies on to the cruel, jagged points of the rock.

In a moment, swept away as it were by that involuntary immersion in the cold water, fled that frightful murderous thought that had haunted Luke Polwhill for so many terrible hours. Now that there was a chance of Dudley being put out of his way by accident and not by design, he seemed to feel how Ellaline would suffer when only her lover's dead body would be given up by the treacherous sea, given up lacerated, bruised, with the breath of life gone for ever from the pale lips that could never again respond to her passionate appeals for only one word to tell that he loved her still.

No, rather than she should suffer even one tithe of what he himself had felt of the pangs of hopeless love, he, Luke, would endure in silence what must always be to him a dreary, lonely life, unrelieved by the sweet companionship of wife or child. Dudley Crewdon must be saved to keep the shadow of sorrow away from the child he himself had loved from the first moment he had seen her in her floating prison. As these thoughts flashed across him, with the rapidity of lightning, Luke, always a powerful swimmer and accustomed to the currents that surged around Deadman's Rock, made his way, not without difficulty, to where he could see his rival battling for dear life against the waters that were rapidly getting the mastery of him, for, though a fair swimmer, Dudley was not accustomed, like Luke, to the currents, and did not know how to strike, as Luke did, across them so as to lessen their power.

"Hold on, Maister Crewdon, I got ye," Luke shouted, clutching at Dudley just as he was sinking. "Ye do as I tells ye an' we'll soon make the boat, she'll go round in these currents an'—"

"Polwhill, what in the devil's name were ye after?" at this juncture shouted a rough voice, and to the intense satisfaction of the half-drowned men a boat containing a sailor rowed rapidly to the spot, and, after considerable trouble, hauled them both in.

"I thout ye were mad," he continued. "when I see ye a-shave the rock so near, an' I coomed down at once. What made ye do it, laad?"

Luke muttered some almost unintelligible reply about not looking or thinking where he was going, and then turned his attention to the task of regaining his own boat, which he had rightly stated had been going round in a circle.

"I'm thinkin', sir," he said to Dudley, "ye'd loike to go back to the cottage an' get yer clothes dried."

But as Dudley found that his valise was intact, he preferred going on to an hotel, where he could make a change, rather than alarm the inmates of the cottage by appearing in that drenched condition.

"Luke," he said, grasping Polwhill's hand when they had gained the shore, "I owe my life to you; but for you by this time I should have been a drowned corpse. I shall never forget the debt I owe you."

Luke drew his hand away almost roughly,—

"Dean't," he said in a hoarse voice. "If yer knew all ye wedn't saake my haand. I aint fit tha't any good man sould touch me."

"Nonsense, man!" Dudley cried, cheerily, —he thought that Luke was a little upset by their late adventure, and was blaming himself for his carelessness. "It was an accident—you could not help it. I am proud to call so brave a man my friend. I cannot thank you sufficiently, but Ellaline shall, for the life you have saved for her!"

"Aye, fur her, 'twas fur her saake I dun it," Luke murmured, a softened look overspreading his sunburnt face. "Praps I sull be forgiven for tha't. I could not maake her unhappy now arter strivin' all these years t'other way; but oh, Maister Dudley!" falling into the old, familiar style, "ye'll be gud to her. Ye'll never maake her regret that she has chosen ye?"

"I promise, Luke," Dudley said, solemnly, awed by something in the man's manner, "if I am spared to wed Ellaline, never, while it is in my power, will I do anything to cause her pain, or to make you regret that you this day risked your life to save mine!"

And, in spite of Luke's opposition, he once more cordially wrung his hand, ere he turned away.

Polwhil looked after him, and a sigh rose to his lips.

"He is worthy of even my darling," was all he said, as he, too, turned away, with a dull pain still at his heart, but with the Cain-like feeling gone for ever.

CHAPTER VI.

LADY ALICIA was delighted to have her handsome son back at Crewdon Hall sooner than she expected; but she looked very grave when he informed her of the object of his coming.

"Mother mine!" he said, seeing the cloud upon her brow, and, bending his tall head, he kissed her still fair face. "You surely will not look with eyes of disfavour upon the daughter I propose to give you? Where will you find a sweeter bride than my Ellaline?"

"She is very beautiful!" his mother answered; "and, I believe, as good as she is lovely. A woman certainly that any man might be proud to win under other conditions, but—have you considered, Dudley?"

"Have I considered what, mother?"

"Your father. I fear he will never consent to your wedding Ellaline."

"Then, mother, I must marry her without," he said, calmly.

"My boy, I fear trouble is in store for you," his mother returned. "You know your father's pride, and his prejudice against a Crewdon marrying anyone beneath him in rank."

"How can we tell that Ellaline is below us in birth? She may be a stray princess. Mother, I love her with the one strong, undying passion of my manhood! I will never give her up, cost what it may!"

Lady Alicia sighed.

She recognised some of the old Squire's dogged obstinacy in her son, and she feared for the result when these two strong wills should come into collision.

Dudley continued,—

"At least, mother, let me have the satisfaction of knowing that you do not disapprove my choice."

"My boy!" she said, very tenderly, laying her hand upon his head as he knelt beside her chair, "if it depended upon me your happiness would be secure. Of what weight in the scale are rank and wealth against true worth and a pure, disinterested affection? Ella, whatever her birth may be, is one of Nature's gentlewomen, and would adorn any station. But can we make your father think so?"

"I shall try, mother. If I fail it will yet be a consolation to me to know that your blessing will be given to us, and that your prayers will follow us into our exile, for no power on earth shall prevent me from making the woman I love my wife!"

Lady Alicia's fears were but too well-founded.

The Squire flew into a towering rage when he comprehended the purport of Dudley's revelation to him.

His fury was so great that he heaped unmeasured terms of reproach upon his son's head and upon that of the designing creature who had ensnared him simply for the purpose of gaining wealth and station.

Dudley listened silently, so long as the abuse was confined to himself; but when undeserved contumely was showered upon his pure, guiltless darling, his enforced calm broke, and, turning upon his father, a terrible scene ensued between them, which ended by Dudley declaring that he would leave Crewdon Hall that very hour, and would never enter it again until his father confessed that he had been mistaken, and apologised for the wrong he had inflicted upon one so fair and sweet as the girl he had so bitterly maligned.

The old Squire smiled grimly to himself as he was thus left master of the field.

Dudley would soon come to his senses when the supplies were stopped, and he was thrown back upon the slender fortune he had inherited from an aunt.

It was as well to give the headstrong youth a lesson; but when he met his weeping wife and saw from her mute, reproachful looks that she put him down as the cause of the absence, perhaps for ever, of her dearly beloved son, he did not feel quite so elated with himself.

He knew how fond Lady Alicia was of her son, and how eagerly she had been looking forward to his return from India, and here he had driven him from her side in his wild burst of anger. He had never thought of her and her delicate health in his mad rage. What if she were to pine herself ill on Dudley's account?

To do the Squire justice he was greatly attached to his wife, and would not willingly have pained her, but in his anger against his son he had never thought of what the consequences might be to her in depriving her of the companionship of her only child.

He might have temporised, and tried to reason Dudley out of his mad infatuation for this nameless, penniless girl; but the Crewdon temper had got the better of him, and he had said things that in his calmer moments he could have wished had been left unsaid.

But he would not own, even to himself, that he had been in the wrong, only he was doubly attentive to his wife, and tried by every means in his power to distract her thoughts from her banished son.

He was scarcely successful in his efforts. Lady Alicia was very quiet, never railing at or reproaching him openly for his harshness to his disobedient heir, but there was a look in her eyes which was harder for him to meet than any amount of verbal reproach would have been for him to bear, and he fancied he could see her getting paler day by day, fading away as it were before his very eyes.

Meanwhile Dudley had returned to Pengarth in a not very joyous state of mind. He rather shrank from telling Ellaline the true state of the case. The girl was very guileless, and innocent, and in that remote village had never heard a word of scorn because she was a foundling. She had no idea that she would be looked down upon by the haughty Squire of Crewdon. Lady Alicia had been so kind and gentle to her on her rare visits to Pengarth that she had been delighted at the thought of living in the same house with so fair and gracious a mother-in-law. How could he tell her that now he could not take her to Crewdon Hall as his bride, that instead of being the wife of a rich man he could only make her the wife of a struggling one?

Yet it must be done, and he would leave it to her to say whether she would still become his, now that he was poor, or—"but he could not follow that train of thought. What would life be to him without Ellaline's love

and companionship? A dreary waste, a wretched existence, which the sooner it was ended the better it would be for him.

But he need not have feared. Ellaline loved him for himself alone, not for what he had. She did not fear poverty, she had never been accustomed to the luxuries of life. The only things that grieved her were that she would not be able to see his mother, and give her the affection of a daughter, and that his love for her should estrange him from his father, and deprive him of the companionship of his loved mother.

"What harm I have done you," she said, half sorrowfully, when at last he had disclosed the facts to her. It would have been better for you had we never met. How you must regret."

"I regret the estrangement, darling, certainly, but if I live to be a hundred I should never regret having met you. I wish I could put you in the position that ought rightfully to be yours when you become my bride; but, Ellaline, you will have to be content with a very modest establishment indeed, instead of being mistress of a grand old mansion."

"I should not care what sort of a home it is if only you are there, Dudley," she said, softly. "In fact, I think I should be happier in a tiny cottage than amid all the splendour of Crewdon Hall, for you would seem to be all mine then, and do you know—"

"Well, Ellaline?"

"I have sometimes felt a tiny bit afraid of meeting your father."

"There is no need any longer for your fear, my darling. Henceforth, the paths trodden by my father and myself will lie far apart," Dudley said, with a slight laugh that was not altogether mirthful.

"But your mother, Dudley? It will be terrible for you never to see her again. Would it not be better to give me up?" in a hesitating voice.

"I will never give you up," he returned, calmly; "and, dear, my mother knows and approves of my determination. I may not see her, but I shall certainly take some means of communicating with her, and letting her know that all is well with us. Ellaline," suddenly changing his tone, "how soon can you be ready to come with me, to give yourself into my keeping for aye?"

Ellaline was no society young lady to hang back and blush and stammer at this direct question. She raised her lovely eyes, full of trust and faith in her lover, to his as she said, simply, yet earnestly,—

"I am yours, Dudley. I will marry you when and where you please."

He gathered her to him and kissed her fondly.

"I shall claim that promise on my return," he said.

"Are you going away again? You have only just come," she exclaimed, in a disappointed tone.

"Yes, dear," he returned, gravely. "I must go up to London to-morrow and consult my solicitors about the small fortune I inherit from a relative. I have never troubled to inquire into it before, but now that it is all I can endow you with I must needs see to it. But, Ellaline, to-night is ours; let us enjoy it as though there were no cares or troubles in store for us. Let us paint the future as we would fain have it, a pathway strewn with roses, and never a thorn to mar its sweetness, and forget that such things as evil passions and sundered lives can exist."

In spite of their impending separation on the morrow, and the knowledge of all Dudley's faith had cost him, neither of the lovers ever forgot that evening spent together, with the silvery moon throwing her radiance over everything, and lighting up rock and boulder, glittering sand and murmuring sea with a fairy brilliance inexpressibly beautiful.

The next day Dudley left, but before he went he had a short conversation with Luke Polwhil, who had changed from a bluff,

hearty, good-natured, if somewhat superstitious person, into a silent, taciturn man.

Some of the sailors declared he was bewitched, that he must have come across the water witch, who was supposed to haunt one of the caverns, and once in every ten years was permitted to cast her spells over any unlucky individual who should venture into her domain.

But old Ben only smiled knowingly when these remarks were made to him. He did not say so openly, for he had grown fond of the beautiful maiden who nursed him so tenderly when he was ill, and seemed to shed sunshine over his declining years; but he was positively certain that it was Ellaline who had bewitched the strong man, and he was not far wrong. It was she who had changed the whole current of Luke Polwhill's life, and taken from him all unwittingly, the negative happiness that had once been his, and left in its place a never-ending pain.

"The laas couldna help it, she were bound ter do it," the old man thought, but never, to his honour be it said, did he give the slightest hint to Ellaline that such was his belief, and the girl never dreamed that her kind protector ever looked upon her in any other light than that of a daughter.

Dudley's communication to Polwhill was but brief. He told him that his supposition had been correct, and that the Squire utterly refused to receive Ellaline as his daughter-in-law, that this had not changed his own determination to marry her, and that he should return as soon as he had settled the business which took him away and demand her from her guardian's hands. Meanwhile, he begged Luke to guard and watch over his treasure in his absence.

This Polwhill promised faithfully to do. It was part of the penance he had set himself for the murderous designs he had once, in a moment of frenzy, entertained against his unsuspecting rival; that he would do everything to further that rival's happiness in helping to unite him to the woman he himself so fervently, yet hopelessly loved.

He recognised now how unsuitable an union between himself and Ellaline would have been, though his love was strong as death, and had well-nigh proved as cruel as the grave. But there was yet time, and he would atone for his sin.

Dudley was detained much longer than he expected, but he wrote loving letters to Ellaline—letters which she treasured fondly, and every word of which she knew by heart.

A few days after Dudley Crewdson had gone to London, Luke announced to old Ben, who had somewhat recovered his health, though he was too feeble to do any work, that he should be absent from Pengarth for a few days.

The old man said nothing, but chuckled to himself knowingly. "Oh! it was plain, the laad"—Luke was over forty—"the laad were bewitched, he were goin' ter spend 'is earnings on a gran' weddin' present fur the laas. Waal, it did not matter; he, Ben, was near the end a' 'is days, an' if the laad chose ter spend 'is savin's on the bit laas, 'e would not prevent 'im!"

But for once old Ben's sagacity was at fault.

Luke was not going to buy a wedding-present. His destination was Crewdson Hall.

With him went a parcel very carefully done up.

When he arrived he boldly asked to see the Squire.

The gorgeous, powdered footman eyed this strange arrival in doubt.

"The Squire were at home," he acknowledged, in answer to Polwhill's demand; "but the fact were, her ladyship were very ill, and he didn't think the master would see anyone, he were that distracted."

"Her ladyship ill! All the more reason I said see 'im at onot," Luke cried, eagerly. "Tell 'im that someone frae Pengarth wants

ter speak t' 'im. Hurry, maan, I tell ye it maay be a matter o' life an' deth!"

Thus adjured, the gorgeous footman descended to take the message, and was rather surprised when he received orders to admit the man to the Squire's study at once.

Squire Crewdson was already regretting that he had sent Dudley away so summarily.

It was the cause of his wife's relapse into illness, and he could not bear to see her wistful eyes, or hear her call out in her sleep for the beloved son whom he had banished.

He was half-inclined to send for Dudley, so that his presence might soothe and solace his mother back to health.

But the Crewdson pride forbade; he could not be the first to take the initiative at reconciliation.

But there was a way out of the difficulty without lowering his pride, for, of course, this messenger from Pengarth must come from his son; and he was ready to receive Dudley back on the same footing, provided, of course, that he would give up the nameless girl he had intended making his bride.

The Squire would not have been so ready to meet any advances from his son had it not been for his wife's condition.

Lady Alicia was very ill, and he feared that were it to go on it might take a fatal turn.

He knew the best, in fact, the only medicine for her would be her son's presence, and that was why he told the footman to admit Luke Polwhill.

The latter looked round in surprise at the grandeur of the house and its appointments, the marble staircase, the beautiful statues, the velvet pile carpets into which the feet sank, the massive furniture and magnificent pictures made a deep impression on him, accustomed as he was to the pinched space and homely accommodation of the cottage at Pengarth.

"He gives an' this oop far her!" he muttered. "He mun lave her sulmost as much as I does, but—"

Here his reverie was interrupted by the entrance of the Squire.

"You come from Pengarth. I presume you have a message for me from my son?" he said, in coldly polite tones.

Luke Polwhill eyed him steadily.

So this was the terrible Squire Crewdson of whom he had heard. He did not look so very formidable.

"I be coom frae Pengarth," he returned, slowly, "right enuff; but Maister Dudley did not send me."

"Then may I ask to what I owe the honour of this visit?" the Squire said, in his stiffest manner.

"I dunno bout the honour, but I coom 'ere ter ave a plain talk w'ee."

"Will you have the goodness to explain?"

"Ees. Ye've made oop yer mind not to let Maister Dudley marry the laas a' 'is choice?"

"Sir," said the Squire haughtily, "my private affairs can be no business of yours. You say you do not come from my son. Permit me to wish you good-day."

"Hoo'd haard, Squire, I coom a long distance ter see ye; ye're not agoin' wi'out listenen ter what I hev ter say."

Squire Crewdson paused with his hand upon the door.

After all perhaps it would be better to hear what the fellow had to say. "Go on," he said curtly, "but be brief; my wife is unwell, and I must return to her shortly."

"Aye, happen she misses her son. Ye needn't froot, I could see how she loved 'im wen she were at Pengarth, but what I wants ter say t' you 'es this. That bit laas who," he stopped suddenly. A mist seemed to come before his eyes. His Ellaline, his waif from the sea, alas! his no longer, it was for her sake that he had taken this journey—

"Well, sir," the Squire cried impatiently.

"Wait a minute. See here, Squire," and rapidly unrolling the parcel he had brought with him Luke displayed the tiny clothes,

and the pearl-embroidered shawl in which Ellaline had been wrapped when found.

"I see, returned the Squire idly, "but, my good man, it was useless your bringing those things here for me to purchase, they are not of the least use to me."

"I did not bring them here to sell," said Luke, quietly. "Nay," as the Squire made a movement as if to leave him, "just hear me for a few moments. See, are they not fine? Wal, these belong to your son's promised wife. They show she does not belong to the common people, but to quality like your sen?"

"Mr.—Mr.—Ah! Polwhill, thank you," in his blandest tones. "Really I take not the slightest interest in those things you have been good enough to bring all this distance. I cannot stay any longer, allow me to wish you good morning."

And that was all the result of poor Luke's heroic attempt to further the welfare of his rival, and the girl he loved so truly.

It was with a heavy heart that he returned to Pengarth with the articles he had treasured for so many years. His journey had been useless, and he could not make atonement for the sin he had contemplated. But though Luke did not know it, it was not altogether in vain that he had had that interview with Squire Crewdson. It is probable that the latter would have thought no more about it, had it not been for the terrible decline in his wife's health. She became delirious, and in her delirium was constantly calling upon her son.

The doctors assured the half-distracted husband that the only thing to save her life was the presence of her son.

But how was this to be accomplished? He did not know where Dudley was, and even if he should succeed in finding him would he return to Crewdson Hall after he had been driven from it. Ah! Yes, his heart told him that nothing would keep Dudley from his mother's side if he knew her life depended on his presence. But if he sued to Dudley he must make some concessions himself.

What was that the Cornishman had said some days before when he was there. The girl might be of gentle birth after all, and, well, as he looked at his wife's drawn, pinched features, and listened to her incessant cries for Dudley, her life was of the most importance to him. If Alicia were taken from him he should soon follow, and then there would be no obstacle to Dudley's marrying Ellaline.

He would go himself to Pengarth, he supposed his son would be there. He could do nothing here, his wife was in competent hands, and seemed more restless and ill at ease in his presence. He stooped over and kissed the feverish brow.

"My darling wife, I go to bring Dudley to you," he said, looking wistfully for some sign of recognition in her eyes, but she only moaned, "Dudley, Dudley, where is he? Why does he not come before it is too late?" and reproaching himself bitterly, the Squire hurried away.

On the beach at Pengarth, seated near her favourite spot, was Ellaline. Very fair she looked in the brilliant sunshine, fair and sweet enough to excuse almost any folly on the part of a man to win her, and so thought even the haughty Squire of Crewdson as he gazed upon her, himself unseen.

Surely the man Polwhill was right, and that delicate loveliness must be descended from a long line of ancestors. He had been to the cottage first, and had been told there that Dudley was still away, and that Ellaline was on the sea-shore alone.

Refusing Polwhill's offer to take him to her, he found his way from the directions Luke gave him, and was obliged to own that in appearance at least Ellaline was worthy to be the wife of even the head of the house of Crewdson.

He hesitated as to how he should address her. This girl with her patrician beauty and delicate grace was a very different sort of

person from the rustic country maiden he had expected to see.

For a moment or so he hesitated, then the remembrance of his wife urged him to action. Raising his hat and bowing with as courtly a grace as though he had been addressing a duchess, he said, "Pardon me, but I think you must be the young lady of whom I am in search. Is your name Ellaline?"

At the first sound of a voice the girl started to her feet, a glad smile overspreading her fair face; for a moment she thought it was Dudley's voice, then as she saw a stranger, the light died out of her eyes, and the soft flush faded from her cheeks.

"Yes, I am Ellaline," she answered simply, at the same time wondering who this stranger who knew her name could be.

"Then will you tell me where I may write to or see my son Dudley? His—his mother is very ill, and I would take him to her ere it is too late."

"You are Dudley's father?" Ellaline exclaimed, too astonished to say anything else.

"Yes, child, for my wife's sake, be merciful, she always loved you. I—I have wronged you, but you will not keep a son from his dying mother's side," the Squire said, brokenly. He had been humbled indeed when he could thus plead to the nameless girl he had once sworn should never, with his consent, become his son's wife.

"Lady Alicia dying? Oh! it cannot be!" Ellaline cried, sorrowfully, as the tears started to her eyes. "She was so good, so kind, to me."

"She was an angel if ever there were one on earth. Child, you will help me to save her?"

"I will do anything you wish," Ellaline said, gently.

"You—you will after what I have said against you? Give me my son's address. Stay, though, Ellaline—you will let me call you so?—you write to him at once, and bid him come to meet you at Crewsdon Hall."

"At Crewsdon Hall?" she echoed, bewildered.

"Yes, child, bid him not tarry, for his mother's sake. You will not refuse to come with me?" pleadingly, as he saw her hesitation. "This for my darling's sake, you will be her daughter now."

This was Dudley's father who spoke. Ellaline did not long resist his pleading. After writing the letter, her preparations did not take long, and she was soon on her way to the Crewsdon ancestral home with the haughty old man, whose pride had been so humbled by affliction.

She would not leave without asking Luke's advice upon the matter. Polwhil, though he knew that now indeed he would be separated from her for ever, bravely concealed his pain, and it was owing to his comings that she went with her prospective father-in-law. What he had failed to do Lady Alicia's dangerous illness had effected. Ellaline and Dudley would be happy now, while he—a sob rose in his throat, which he resolutely choked down—he would not mar the brightness of her future by showing one trace of the agony he felt at the thought of the joyless years that stretched before him. He was only a rough fisherman, but he was of the stuff of which martyrs are made.

He did indeed shrink back when Ellaline, after having kissed old Ben, who was in his second childhood, threw her arms round his brawny neck and kissed him repeatedly, calling him the best of fathers, and telling him that he must give her away at her wedding.

Each of those kisses, so innocently given, seemed to burn his rugged cheek as though it had been branded with a red-hot iron, and it was almost a relief to him when the train bore them away, and he could indulge his grief alone. Henceforth there was nothing in the world for him to live for.

Ben's superstitious prophecy had come true. The child he had saved long years before had worked him the worst harm which woman

can work man, and she had done it all unwittingly. To the hour of her death Ellaline would never know of the consuming passion Luke's heart bore for her—his wail from the sea.

Dudley's astonishment may be better imagined than described when he received Ellaline's letter bidding him meet her at Crewsdon Hall, where his mother lay dangerously ill; but he lost no time in obeying the summons.

The Squire met him at the door, and by the cordial clasp of his hand Dudley knew they were reconciled.

"How is she?" were his first words.

"A shade better," was his father's answer.

"And Ellaline?"

"Is with her mother." How Dudley's heart rejoiced at those words. It assured him the Squire would no longer oppose his marriage.

"Do you know, my boy," the old man continued, "that your mother began to improve from the time I brought Ellaline here, now three days ago? She is conscious, and I believe your presence will do more to restore her than all the doctor's medicine."

No word of pardon passed between the two men, but they understood one another, and Dudley knew that he would never hear again anything from his father on the score of his wife's unknown birth.

Nor did he. The Squire, who, from the extreme fineness of the clothes in which she was found, was almost as assured of her gentle birth as Polwhil himself, set on foot many inquiries to ascertain, if possible, her parentage, but without avail; nothing was ever discovered. If she had been a sea-nymph's daughter, escaped from a palace of pearl and coral under the ocean, there could not have been less trace found as to who she was or where she came from; but none the less was her father-in-law proud of the sensation she created when, on her marriage, she was presented at Court by the still beautiful Lady Alicia.

For the Squire had been right. Dudley's presence seemed to have a magical effect upon his mother. She slowly but surely regained her health and spirits, tended as she was by Ellaline's loving care, and the proud master of Crewsdon could not but acknowledge to himself that his prospective daughter-in-law excelled in all gentle, feminine attributes.

At last came the day when Dudley and Ellaline were united by the Reverend Mark Fenton in the private chapel attached to Crewsdon Hall.

Many fair brides had been seen from time to time in that ancient chapel, but never a fairer one did the sun, glinting through the stained-glass windows, shine upon than the one who breathed so softly the vows that gave her into Dudley's keeping for life.

In spite of Ellaline's wish, Luke Polwhil was not present at her marriage. Though she and Dudley had gone down to Pangarth specially to ask him, they could not alter his determination.

"Na, na!" he said, shaking his head. "I suld only be oot o' place, mang y'ere fine frens. I deon't want ter disgrace y'er."

"What nonsense, dear old Luke! As if you could disgrace anyone. You will come? I will take no denial from you who have been my best friend," but he was proof against her coaxing. She should not be jeered at on account of her humble friends.

Secretly, Squire Crewsdon was delighted when he learned the failure of their mission.

Polwhil was a very good fellow in his place, but he would rather not see him among the guests at his son's wedding.

As part of her bridal robe Ellaline wore the beautiful shawl in which she had been enveloped when found.

Time had not yellowed the silky fabric, nor tarnished the lustre of the pearls which had been embroidered into it.

The Court dressmaker who received the order for her trousseau went into raptures over the lovely material.

If only she could procure some more of it her fortune would be made, she declared. Never had she seen anything even approaching it in beauty.

Ellaline's life in her new home was one of almost perfect happiness, idolized by her husband as she was.

Lady Alicia was an ideal mother-in-law, and even the haughty old Squire grew very fond of his son's wife.

Indeed, after a lovely boy had made his appearance as heir to all these broad lands, and to be the joy and pride of his grandfather's heart, the Squire quite forgave Ellaline the fact that she was the first wife of a head of the house of Crewsdon whose genealogy could not be traced back to the Saxon Heptarchy, or some like remote period, and was never tired of exclaiming her excellence.

Yet, amid all her happiness, Ellaline had one regret.

This was that Luke Polwhil had drifted entirely out of her life.

While old Ben lived, he had stayed at the cottage, tending him and indulging all his childish fancies; but when he died—which he did about a year after Ellaline's marriage—Luke paid a second and last visit to Crewsdon Hall to tell them he had sold the cottage, and was going to try his fortunes in a foreign land, and to bid them farewell—an eternal farewell, as it proved; for, though, in answer to her entreaties, he promised to write from time to time, from the hour he left their threshold neither Dudley nor Ellaline ever again beheld or heard from Luke Polwhil.

Dudley's wife grieved at this sincerely. She often wondered whether he had been drowned at sea, or whether his bones were bleaching on the scorching desert sand, beneath a blazing sun; but she never knew the real truth—that it was the memory of his hopeless love for her which had driven him into voluntary exile, even while he lingered for the sight of her face, the sound of her soft voice; how he feared that if he remained he might one day reveal it to her; and how, sometimes, he thought—though these moments were rare indeed—it would have been better for him had he never seen or rescued his wife from the sea.

FACTIAL.

The best place to find the "whirled" of society is in the ball-room.

Ed: "What are you doing nowadays?" Harry: "I'm engaged in a rather ticklish business." Ed: "Courtship?"

LAWYER: "I have my opinion of you." Citizen: "Well, you can keep it. The last opinion I got from you cost me fifty pounds."

"I'll take my hat, waiter." "What kind of a hat was it, sir?" "A new silk one." "Sorry, sir; but all the new hats were taken some time ago."

WIFE: "I hope you are pleased with those slippers, darling?" Husband (hesitatingly): "Yes, dear. I'm so glad I learned to walk on snowshoes when I was a boy."

AN UNUSUAL OPPORTUNITY.—Clara: "Why did you introduce that young man to me? Didn't you know that he is deaf and dumb?" Ethel: "Yes, dear; but I thought it gave you a splendid opportunity to do all the talking."

SHE: "I sorry your sister is not here, Mr. Blunt." Mr. Blunt: "She didn't feel quite able. She went to the cooking school this morning, and you know, after the girls get through cooking, they have to eat what they've made."

Mrs. BRYDE: "Dear me! I've quite spoiled that batch of biscuits. What had I better do—give 'em to the poor?" Mr. Bryde: "No, dear—no; not if you love the poor. Just whistle them down a little, and save them to patch up rat-holes."

SOCIETY.

EVERYONE will be sorry to hear that Princess Christian is very much troubled with her eyes, and that her journey to Wiesbaden is mainly prompted by the desire to place herself again under the care of the celebrated oculist from whom she derived a certain amount of relief in the summer. It is to be hoped that the Princess's visit to Wiesbaden will be attended with greater success, and that she will return to us fully restored to health. This forced retirement to one like Princess Christian is little short of torture.

The ex-Empress Eugénie has certainly shown great taste in laying out large sums of money on her new palatial residence at Farnborough. Her Majesty keeps up her friendly relations with Sir Evelyn Wood, the Commandant at Aldershot, hard by, and it seems a real pleasure to her to interchange ideas with one who is so nearly linked with the memories of the ill-fated Prince Imperial. Part of the Farnborough property is laid out in buildings for a small monastery as well as a convent, erected at the expense of the Empress. Curiously enough, there is a subterranean passage connecting these two institutions.

More than one French journal has lately discussed the advisability of the early marriage of Prince Albert Victor, and has offered him a choice of wives, more remarkable for its variety than its selection. The latest suggestion is that Our Prince's eldest should espouse the Grand Duchess Xenia, eldest daughter of the Czar, who, unfortunately, is only just fourteen years old. In the first place, Prince Albert Victor is in no hurry to marry; next the match proposed is unsuitable from every point of view; and, lastly, the future bride of the Prince has already been fixed upon in "family conclave solemnly assembled," and the announcement of the selection is merely a matter of months, when Parliament will be called upon to set the couple up in housekeeping.

There has been a wedding lately among the Turkish Princesses. Two of the Sultan's family were married last month; and here, also, presents to the guests and friends of the "happy couples" were the order of the day. The Grand Vizier got a magnificent riviere of diamonds; and the Sheikh-ul-Islam received a thousand pounds in hard cash.

ONE good result of the abdication of King Milan is that Queen Nathalie will at once return to Servia. She will take up her residence at Kragjevat, and will no longer be separated from her son. What is to be the future of the lady who monopolises the ex-King's affections is not yet known. Rumour has it that she is trying to persuade her lover to migrate to Paris, where she could head his table, and share his pleasures without being ostracised by the persons of that easy-going city.

The Duc d'Anjou is to be permitted to re-enter France, and His Royal Highness is already making arrangements and giving orders for his abode in Paris. Of course, as he is going back, during the Exhibition his residence will be the chief centre of attraction to all that is best in the most aristocratic spheres of Paris, and the Duc being perfectly well aware of this, is giving very extensive orders in consequence. Henri of Orleans is indeed the most amiable and charming Prince belonging to the *branche cadette*, and has little or nothing in him of the *bourgeois* element which went so far to make poor old Louis Philippe and his umbrella so unpopular with the romantic and volatile Parisians. Not only is the Duc a thorough man of the world and the most delightful host, but he possesses to a most eminent degree that art which seems nowadays almost to be lost, of being a *bon vivant* in the most comprehensive sense of the term, without ever allowing his *bien vivre* to degenerate into anything approaching vulgarity.

STATISTICS.

THE United States has seven hundred railroads. They employ 500,000 persons.

Or 26,000 criminals arrested in Paris, 16,000 had not attained the age of twenty.

In one hundred years England has aided her merchant ships to the amount of £55,000,000, and her private shipyards to the amount of £20,000,000.

NEXT to theology, law probably has done more than any other science in keeping the printer busy. It has been computed that it requires from seventy thousand to eighty thousand printed pages every year to publish what is known as "reported cases" of the American and English courts. This, however, is but a small portion of the work done by the printer. Every year adds to the shelves of our law libraries about two hundred books, large octavos, in the shape of volumes of statute law, digests, elementary work, &c. The printing and proof-reading of this vast body of literature must be most carefully done. Hence law books, as a general thing, are expensive things, and a law library which contains no more than seven thousand volumes may be easily worth ten thousand pounds.

GEMS.

WE confess small faults in order to insinuate that we have no great ones.

THE feeble tremble before opinion, the foolish defy it, the wise judge it, the skilful direct it.

CHEERFULNESS is an excellent wearing quality. It has been called the bright weather of the heart.

IT is only those who have character and principle themselves who are qualified to praise character in others.

HEALTH is the only riches that a man ought to set a value on, for without it all men are poor, let their estates be what they will.

MORAL courage will always rank higher than physical. The one is a daily necessity, while the other may be required only in emergencies.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

RICE GEMS.—One cup cold boiled rice, one egg, one cup milk, one saltspoonful salt, one cup flour. Bake in hot gem pans that have been well buttered.

SARDINE TOAST.—Put the sardines in a hot plate, with a little of the oil, cover and heat. Then season with cayenne, salt and lemon juice. Serve on toast. The oil is added, and the sardines covered to prevent their drying up.

CHICKEN CROQUETTES.—One cup cold roast chicken, one half cup stuffing, one egg, salt and pepper. Chop the chicken very fine, and mix it well with the stuffing and egg. Cook one tablespoonful of flour in one tablespoonful of hot butter, add enough hot milk gradually to make it thick, and mix with the chicken, adding salt and pepper to taste. When cold and hard, shape into rolls and cover with fine bread crumbs, roll in beaten egg and crumbs, and fry one minute in very hot fat.

HOP YEAST.—One half cup hops, one quart boiling water, one cup flour, one-quarter cup sugar, one tablespoonful salt, one cup yeast or one compressed yeast cake. Steep the hops in the boiling water five minutes, then strain off the hop liquor into the flour, sugar and salt which have been thoroughly mixed together, and let it boil about a minute, stirring all the time. When cool, add the yeast, cover slightly, and set in a warm place to rise; and when light and foamy, bottle and keep in a cool place.

MISCELLANEOUS.

ROSKIN urges strongly and forcibly that the excellence of man does not depend upon the standing or scale of his profession or occupation, whatever it may be; and he impresses upon every man the duty not to rise out of his profession into another supposedly higher one, but to make himself and his vocation better and higher by his noble efforts within its sphere.

THAT delightful Frenchman, Max O'Rell, says in his book about the United States: American women generally enjoy that second youth which Nature bestows also on numbers of French women. At forty they bloom out into a more majestic beauty. The eyes retain their fire and lustre, the skin does not wrinkle, the hands, neck and arms remain firm and white.

In all right courses of life a man resolutely desirous of becoming a wiser, a better-informed, better disciplined, more useful individual, will find his thoughts, both of the end and the way, get clearer as he proceeds in his work. He sees more truly and more brightly what it is he wants; he sees more fully the means for its attainment; and with better prospect both of the end and way, there comes increased motive for the self-improving effort of the journey.

THE FLIGHT OF INSECTS.—Some insects use all four wings in flight, such, for example, as the dragon flies, bees, wasps, and may-flies. Some, like the beetles, locusts, and the "hemiptera," or half-winged insects, only use the hind pair of wings for flight, the first pair being greatly thickened, and forming covers called "elytra," beneath which the flying wings can be sheltered when not in use. In many insects, such as the common bluebottle fly and the gnat tribe, one pair of wings appears to have vanished altogether; but in reality they are only undeveloped, and still exist in rudimentary form. In the case of the bluebottle, they form tiny "alulae," or winglets while in the case of the gnat they are shrivelled up into a pair of little slender spikes, the tips of which are knobbed. These rudimentary wings are called "halteres," or balancers; and small as they are, and insignificant as they appear to be, they exercise so powerful an influence on the flight, that if one of them be cut off, the insect seems quite unable to guide its course. The halteres are very conspicuous in any of the insects which are familiar to us under the title of "daddy-long-legs," and their structure can easily be made out with an ordinary pocket lens.

A TIGER, FRIGHTENED BY A MOUSE.—A traveller gives the following anecdote of a tiger kept at the British Residency at Calcutta. "But what annoyed him far more than our poking him with a stick, or tantalizing him with shins of beef or legs of mutton, was introducing a mouse into his cage. No fine lady ever exhibited more terror at the sight of a spider, than this magnificent royal tiger betrayed on seeing a mouse. Our mischievous plan was to tie the little animal by a string to the end of a long pole, and thrust it close to the tiger's nose. The moment he saw it he leaped to the opposite side, and when the mouse was made to run near him, he jammed himself into a corner and stood trembling and roaring in such an ecstasy of fear that we were always obliged to desist, in pity to the poor brute. Sometimes we insisted on his passing over the spot where the unconscious little mouse ran backwards and forwards. For a long time, however, we could not get him to move; till at length by the help of a stick we obliged him to start; but instead of pacing leisurely across his den, or of making a detour to avoid the object of his alarm, he generally took a kind of flying leap, so high as nearly to bring his back in contact with the roof of his cage."

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

M. D.—We would gladly aid you if we could, but we know of no remedy.

A. C.—The word wealth first occurs in Genesis, chapter xxxiv., verse 29.

F. S. N. W.—No knowledge of any instrument of the kind for the purpose stated.

P. R.—The dust of meerschaum is the best article known with which to polish meerschaum pipes.

M. G. A.—Kibble is the name of a large bucket for raising ore out of mines. It is also written kibbal.

B. S. D.—1 A fancy box of stationery would be an appropriate present on the occasion referred to. 2 Yes.

M. S. T.—Try clear water and white castile soap. Apply first with fine flannel and afterwards rub dry and polish with chamoe skin. Use no acids.

H. N.—Your landlord can easily put in a distress for the amount of the arrears of rent. Under the circumstances, however, stated by you we should think upon your making a proper application he would refrain from so doing.

L. M. M.—To transfer engravings to paper, place the engraving for a few seconds over the vapour of iodine. Dip a slip of white paper in a weak solution of starch, and when dry, lay the slip upon the engraving, and place both for a few minutes under a press.

F. H. H.—It depends on the subject of difference. If it relates to physical appearance, then from should be used, as, "I differ from you in height, weight, and complexion." If the difference were a difference of opinion, then with should be used, as, "I differ with you as to the real truth of that matter."

D. D. N.—Some of the new songs certainly are not worth one moment's consideration; they are so stupid that one cannot resist throwing them aside and returning to our old favourites, Burns and Moore, with a feeling of relief and pleasure. What can be more beautiful than Moore's "Last Rose of Summer?"

E. C. H. T.—A good leather polish is made as follows: Take two ounces of mutton suet, six ounces of beeswax, six ounces of powdered sugar candy, two ounces of soft soap, and one ounce of lampblack. Dissolve the soap in a quarter of a pint of water; then add the other ingredients; melt and mix together; add a gill of turpentine. Lay it on the leather with a sponge, and polish off with a brush. It is an excellent polish for harness or leather in any form.

MOSS ROSE.—In South America, Spain, Italy, and other tropical countries, girls of fourteen are fitted by nature to assume the cares of matrimony, being developed to a much higher degree than those living in the temperate zones. The idea of an English girl of that age proposing to marry is preposterous, and the man who would try to persuade her to do so must be either a knave or a fool. At that time of life she is neither physically nor mentally capable of performing the exacting duties of a wife.

R. E. A. D.—To make a good type-writer, the person learning should have a fair education, particularly in regard to spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Many may find it comparatively easy to learn, while others may take a long time to acquire the proficiency necessary to get steady work and good pay. The time spent in the study of type-writing varies with the aptitude of the beginner. Three months will suffice for some, so many hours a day being devoted to practice, while others may require six months to understand thoroughly the mechanism of the machine used, and to do the work required quickly and well.

L. D.—1. Bathe your eyes in a weak solution of borax and water. 2. For catarrh, snuff up your nose occasionally a little table salt. 3. Drop a small piece of spermaceti into the starch while it is boiling. It will impart to the shirt-fronts the gloss you desire. 4. Javelle water is prepared by taking four pounds of soda to one pound of chloride of lime in one gallon of water. Put the soda into a vessel over the fire, and add one gallon of boiling water; let it boil for ten or fifteen minutes; then add the chloride of lime by throwing it, free from lumps, into the soda water. When cold, pour into a jug or large bottle and cork tightly.

G. H. A.—The peculiar effect produced upon some metals by heating to redness and then suddenly cooling them is known as tempering. By this means extreme hardness is obtained, especially in steel, which is so susceptible to this process that almost any degree of hardness or brittleness can be obtained. If, for instance, a piece of steel is made red hot and then plunged into cold water, it becomes hard and brittle when cold, and is actually, though slightly, increased in bulk. Reheat the metal and allow it to cool slowly, and it again becomes soft and malleable as before. If it is again reheated, but not to redness, and suddenly cooled, it is still further softened. If before reheating the surface has been polished, a beautiful shade of colour is produced by the heat, which is varied according to the temperature employed. For ordinary operations the metal is cooled by plunging it in cold water; but oil, mercury, and saline solution are used for special purposes. A series of experiments conducted by eminent authorities has proved that the following colours are produced at the temperature given: Very pale yellowish, by 450 degrees Fahrenheit; pale straw, 450 degrees; yellow, 470 degrees; brown, 480 degrees; mottled brown, 510 degrees; purple, 530 degrees; bright blue, 550 degrees; blue, 560 degrees; dark blue, 600 degrees.

G. E. D.—1. Bunions are sometimes got rid of by painting them with iodine. Apply every night just before retiring. See also answer to A. P. P. 2. We know of nothing that will permanently remove superfluous hair. Use the tweezers. 3. Keep the piano closed. 4. Only a fair education is required.

L. G. N.—You are legally bound to obey all the lawful behests of your master. We cannot understand why, as an apprentice, you should object to turn the machine you name, or to run on errands. Both appertain to the business you are being taught, and you cannot refuse.

A. P. P.—The following is a good cure for bunions: Take chloric acid twenty grains, one ounce of fir, balsam, and white wax each, melt the balsam and wax, and while cooling, add the acid; stir until an ointment is formed, spread it on a piece of kid, and apply to the bunion; change once or twice a day.

G. F. N.—Marie Aimée, a favourite opera-bouffe singer and comedienne, died at Autun, France, Oct. 2, 1887, aged about thirty-five. She was born in Algeria. She made her debut in 1866 at Rio Janeiro, South America. She subsequently made a tour in Europe, and visited the United States in 1870, appearing at the Grand Opera House, New York, on Dec. 2, of that year. Having accumulated quite a fortune, she entered the managerial field in France and leased two opera houses. The enterprises at first proved successful, but in two seasons she lost nearly all her wealth, and once more visited the United States.

HEART TO HEART.

What is this that comes between—
Shadowy, faint, elusive,
Perceptible, yet unseen—

Like some sweet hope delusive?
You say that you love me well,
And believe your saying—
Yet for ever this strange spell
Around our hearts is playing.

As we stand here, side by side—
And in your eyes love's greeting—
Before us there seems to glide
This phantom swift and fleeting.
"Ah, once so near, once so dear!"
It murmurs. "Can you forget?
Have you for the past no tear,
For other days no regret?"

Coldly, then, I turn from you,
And seem to see falling rain,
To hear "Love, will you be true?"
(For that dear past comes again)
And look in eyes full of grief
That stern fate should intervene—
Eyes whose glance of fond belief
Wraith-like, gently floats between.

Lord nor sea can divide
Like this sweet solemn vision,
That softly comes to chide us
And show love's real Elysian!
Where we cannot truly dwell—
You and I—so let us part:
For love is not love, nor well,
When it speaks not heart to heart.

SCOTT.—In ancient times, in Scotland, when a poor but popular couple were married, their friends got up a merry-making for the occasion, which was called a penny-wedding. It was pretended that each guest should give a penny towards defraying the expenses of the feast, while in fact contributions were poured in to any amount that the donors might be pleased to bestow. The fund thus accumulated was not only sufficient to pay for all the wedding festivities, but left a surplus, which was given as a dowry to the bride, and that was the way that a young couple were "set on their feet" by a penny-wedding. It was a pleasant and delicate way the Scotch people of the olden times had of practically exhibiting their neighbourly generosity to poor young friends about to set out in wedded life.

P. W. G.—In reference to the number of stars in the heavens, Brando says: "Hopeless as any attempt to count the 'starry host' may appear to be, it has nevertheless been sometimes made. Of the stars visible to the naked eye at any time, the number probably does not exceed a few thousands; but in the telescope they are prodigiously multiplied. Sir W. Herschel estimates that in a zone not exceeding two degrees in breadth, but including a portion of the milky way, the number which passed through the field of his telescope in the course of an hour amounted to 50,000. On account of their irregular distribution this estimate furnishes a very imperfect datum for inferring the whole number in the sphere; but it has been supposed that not fewer than seventy-five millions may be visible in a good telescope. Baron Zach, indeed, was of opinion that there may be one thousand millions in the entire heavens. But it is abundantly obvious that all estimates of this sort are nothing better than fanciful conjectures; and instead of a limit being found to the number of the stars, there is an infinitely greater probability that if an observer could transport himself to the remotest visible star, he would there behold a firmament not less rich than the one he left behind. 'Every increase,' says Sir J. Herschel, 'in the dimensions and power of instruments, which successive improvements in optical science have attained, has brought into view multitudes innumerable of objects invisible before; so that, for anything experience has hitherto taught us, the number of the stars may be really infinite, in the only sense in which we can assign a meaning to the word.'"

M. R. C.—For pimples such as you describe, an external application is recommended, composed of one ounce of sweet almonds and one drachm of fluid potash, shaken well together, then adding one ounce of rose-water and six ounces of pure water. Dash this lotion on the parts of the face affected night and morning.

H. L. R.—The Needles is a cluster of five pyramidal rocks in the Channel, lying off the western extremity of the Isle of Wight. They are composed of thick strata of chalk alternating with very thin strata of black flint. The waves are continually producing changes in their forms, and only three of the pyramids now stand prominently out of the water.

C. C. V.—You ought to consider the moral phases of the subject, which you seem to have lost sight of. If you were to reflect calmly upon the matter, you would not fail to see that you are treating your lover very unfairly, to say the least. You ought to act in accordance with your parents' wishes and advice, and give him a decided answer, one way or the other, at once.

D. D.—To make an inextinguishable match, take four parts of dry nitre, two of gunpowder, two of charcoal, and one of sulphur, and mix them; then run the compound into paper cases nine inches in length, and of the thickness of a common quill. When this compound is set on fire, rain will not extinguish it; the burning end of the match must be cut off to stay the fire.

AMY.—All you can do is to behave yourself in a lady-like way, and let things take their course. It would be well for you not to stop for the young man again, when you get off from your duties first. He should seek you, and not you him. Perhaps if he should see that you will not put yourself out of the way to secure his company, he would put himself out of the way to secure yours.

W. E. S.—A good preparation for cleaning silks may be made as follows: Quarter pound of soft soap, a teaspoonful of brandy, and a pint of gin; mix all well together and strain; spread the mixture on each side of the silk, without creasing it, then wash it in two or three waters and iron on the wrong side. It will look as good as new, and will not injure the most delicate colours.

L. M. S.—You have no legal means of preventing your son's marriage, and under the circumstances, we cannot advise you to do more than to point out to him the wisdom of waiting until he is at least twenty-one before assuming the responsibilities of a married man. If the young people choose to come to London, some one would be found, without much difficulty, to perform the ceremony.

R. G. P.—Two kind of gasmeters are used; the water, or wet meter, and the dry meter; the former measuring the gas by the revolution of a chambered wheel partly immersed in water, the latter by the alternate sliding and emptying of two cavities formed by circular discs and flexible bands connecting them, somewhat like double bellows. The amount of flow in each case is indicated on dials.

M. C. P.—Mispah is a Hebrew word, meaning literally watch-tower. The signification you will find in Genesis, chapter xxxi., verse 49, where it states that Laban and Jacob set up a heap of stones as a witness to a covenant between them, and Laban called it "Mispah; for he said, The Lord watch between thee and me when we are absent one from another." The word Mispah is often inscribed on engagement rings.

A. R. R.—The souring of milk during thunderstorms has been explained by attributing it to the ozone or active oxygen which is produced in the air by electrical discharges. We have carefully observed the phenomena, and have concluded that the effect is more mechanical than chemical, and that it is the concussion produced by the shock rather than by any change in the atmosphere which leads to the souring of the milk.

E. S. W.—1. To make ginger beer, put into one gallon of boiling water one pound of lump sugar, one ounce of the best unbleached Jamaica ginger well bruised, three-quarters of an ounce of cream of tartar, and two jamaes aloes. Stir the ingredients frequently in a covered vessel until lukewarm; then add two ounces of yeast, and keep it in a moderately warm place so as to excite a brisk fermentation; the next day rack and strain through flannel. Let it work for a day or two, then strain it again and bottle, wiring down the corks. 2. To make ginger pop, take five and a-half gallons of water, three-quarters of a pound of ginger root bruised, half an ounce of tartaric acid, two and a-quarter pounds of white sugar, the whites of three eggs beaten, one small teaspoonful of lemon oil, and one gill of yeast. Boil the ginger root for thirty minutes in one gallon of the water, strain off, and put the oil in while hot. Mix. Make over night. In the morning skim and bottle, keeping out sediment.

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